Chemotherapy Safe Handling

Limiting nursing exposure with a hazardous drug control program

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BACKGROUND: Nurses and other healthcare workers are at risk for adverse health consequences from occupational exposure to hazardous drugs.

OBJECTIVES: An evidence-based program for nurses was implemented to improve safe handling practices and reduce exposure to hazardous drugs.

METHODS: A quasiexperimental design was used, with pre- and post-tests of knowledge about chemotherapy exposure and pre- and post-test observations of compliance with donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE). Surface wipe tests were conducted to determine hazardous drug contamination in care areas. A toolkit of interventions, including hazardous drug identification, standardization of PPE, and education, was used.

FINDINGS: Mean knowledge scores of chemotherapy improved after education. Correct donning of PPE was high before and after the intervention, and the correct doffing sequence improved postintervention. One sample was positive for 5-fluorouracil, affirming the difficulty of maintaining an environment free of contamination.

KEYWORDS
occupational exposure; drug therapy; nurses; personal protective equipment

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