

**MANAGEMENT OF MEDICAL WASTE BY PROFESSIONAL NURSES AT
THREE SELECTED HOSPITALS IN THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY,
VHEMBE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.**

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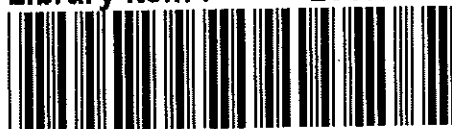
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ABSTRACT

Medical waste is all waste material generated at health care facilities, including a broad range of materials, from used needles and syringes, to soiled dressings, body parts, diagnostic samples, blood, chemicals pharmaceutical devices and radioactive materials. It also refers to any solid waste that is generated in diagnosis, treatment, or immunization of human beings or animals, in research pertaining thereto, or in the production or testing of biological materials.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the management of medical waste by professional nurses in three selected hospitals at Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District Limpopo Province, South Africa.

A qualitative research, which was an explorative, descriptive and contextual design, was used. The researcher conducted face to face interviews to collect data. Data analysis was done using open-coding method, as described by Tesch. Trustworthiness was ensured using Cuba's model that incorporated credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability.

Ethical standards were ensured through the following: obtaining permission to conduct the study, observing the right to privacy, informed consent, anonymity, autonomy, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study.

The following findings emerged: medical waste in the three selected hospitals is managed according to the Department of Health guidelines; however professional nurse sometimes experience shortage of protective clothing, which seriously posed them to risk to their health and they also experience shortage of medical waste containers and as such professional nurse are sometimes compelled to mix medical waste. Recommendation were made to assist policy makers to review policy guidelines in order to consider the issue of protective clothing as a first priority and the Department of Health to make sure that protective clothing and medical waste containers are always available. Recommendations from the study were also made to assist the government to develop polices in the proper management of medical waste.

Key words: Medical waste, Professional nurses, Disposal and Management.