

Abstract

In New Mulago hospital, just like any other health facility, health care workers are surrounded by a variety of health and safety hazards unique within their working environment. These hazards do not only reduce the quality of life of the health care workers but also have a negative impact on the care received by the patients. In Uganda, efforts to reduce occupational health and safety risks for health workers are far from sufficient as they do not adequately protect those they are meant to serve. These inadequacies have adversely affected efforts to deal with occupational hazards affecting health care workers in Uganda's hospitals. This study therefore aims at assessing the occupational safety measures among health care professionals and support staff in New Mulago Hospital surgical units.

Findings from this study were obtained using a cross-sectional survey design in which 223 questionnaires were administered to respondents and only 143 were fully answered and returned. 129 respondents all of whom were health care professionals and support staff established and concluded that many of the hospital staff are aware about occupational hazards such as needle and sharp stick injuries, burn injuries from chemicals, exposure to dangerous dental amalgam, infectious fluid exposures, radiation exposure, assault and blood splash besides infections. The study also reveals and concludes that a number of occupational safety practices are being implemented in the surgical units of new Mulago hospital. Some of these include use of blunt suture needles, gloving, wearing of water proof garments, exposure to information and purchase of new equipment and training besides compliance with guidelines of not foregoing isolation of infectious patients.

The study further reveals that despite the implementation of occupational safety practices, there are a number of gaps still prevalent. Some of these include limited staff leading to work overload, lack of soap at the sinks, irregularity in disposal of needles & sharps, and limited sinks besides failure to wash hands amongst some health workers.

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the study recommends that efforts be furthered to sensitize health care workers and support staff in as far occupational safety practices are concerned. This should be done to minimize cases of injuries, untreatable infections and exposure to radiations. The study also recommends that the Government of Uganda through its line Ministry of Health should help hospitals in reducing the workload amongst health professionals and support staff by recruiting more staff to an optimally viable number. This should be coupled with increased procurement of new medical equipment as old ones phase out.