

## Background

Medical waste handlers are at a sustainable risk of acquiring any occupational health hazards through exposure from waste generated from the patient and the surrounding environment, workers are exposed to physical, chemical, biological and psychological stress health hazards that results to acquiring infections and sustain injuries. Optimal practices on waste management by medical waste handlers can minimize these risks.

## Objective

The aim of this study was to determine factors that influence the occurrences of occupational health hazards among waste handlers in Kampala international university teaching hospital.

## Method

A cross sectional study was carried out, researcher administered questionnaire were given to total number of 70 waste handlers and one Key informants from Kampala international university teaching hospital. Data was entered and analyzed by SPSS software package (version 2) Chi-square and Fisher exact tests were used to assess risks of association. A p-value  $f < 0.05$  was considered statistical significant.

## Results

From the study 70 medical waste handlers were interviewed and overall 3 (95.7% ) of medical waste handlers had experienced at least one occupational health hazard during the past one year, the following results were revealed, 40 (57.1%) were female and 30 (42.9%) male, 37 (77.1%) were in age range of 29-39 years, 54 (77.1%) were married, 45 (64.3%) had attended primary school, 36 (51.4%) had a working experience of 1-5 years, 44 (62.6%) were working 8-15 hours per day, 67 (95.7%) had experienced occupational health hazards at work place during the past one year. 26 (37.1%) of medical waste handlers had experienced occupational health hazards twice. The most occurring occupational health hazards were 52 (74.3%) trauma (low back pain, slips, falls, muscle sprains, fractures, assault needle prick injury). 24 (34.3%) were immunized against Hepatitis B virus, 13 (18.6%) were trained on waste management, 59 (84.3%) used examination gloves only, 32 (45.7%) used heavy duty gloves, 32 (35.7%) of the respondents used aprons, 31 (44.3%) used musk, 5 (7.1%) used goggles, 69 (98.9%) of respondents had gumboots, 11 (15.7%), 68 (97.1%) reported the incidences, 67 (95.9%) were supervised daily, 31(44.3%) were counseled, 22(31.4%) had knowledge on post exposure prophylaxis, all the medical waste handlers were knowledgeable on waste management practice.

## Conclusion

Medical waste handlers experience occupational health hazards at the work place and this was associated to inadequate training, low vaccination coverage on hepatitis B virus, insufficient protective gears contributed to the high rates of occupational health hazards among medical waste handlers. Prevention of occupational health hazards should be a priority, management should provide sufficient protective gears, embrace the national program on infection control, regular trainings of medical waste handlers on safe handling of medical waste, vaccination of hepatitis B to reduce occurrences of occupational health hazards, provision of post exposure prophylaxis, counseling and follow up of those affected.