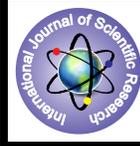


Pharmaceutical Waste Management & Disposal Practice



Law

KEYWORDS :

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Introduction:

In India 'Swatch Bharat Abhiyan' is on rise which was launched by honorable PM of India, with a dream of making it a better and clean place to live. This vision has encouraged many to take up to clean their surroundings. Though in many parts of the city/villages on the roads and lanes, dustbins are provided, nevertheless people don't bother to use them. The danger of such garbage arises when it contains unused expired medicines or used syringes or other pharmacy products.

Although medicines are prepared to cure a person but when taken with a wrong prescriptions adversely affects a person. In many countries and especially in India according to WHO spurious medicines are produced in large number. The reason behind this is production of duplicates or replicas of original medicines and also by selling expired drugs as new. This all happens because of wrongful thrown of pharmaceutical waste. Yes these are to be found on roads out of hospitals, households and pharmacy shops and manufacturing companies too.

Because these products are thrown as like other garbage there is a danger of its misuse when it goes into a wrong hand. Also it is dangerous for public health too as it causes pollution too. In this article I want to discuss the ill effects of pharma waste and also its misuses when it goes in wrong hands. There are number of rackets in India where the expired medicines are picked and sold as a new by changing its label.

Adverse effects of improper disposal of Pharmaceutical Waste :

When any medicine is expired or used medicines which are not required we simply put it in a dustbin or outside house. This can cause danger to stray animals too who feed on the garbage. Also for rag pickers too it can cause a serious health problem. Sometimes beggars also do feed on food which is lying outside and if it is mixed with the garbage with medicines it will have adverse effect on health of such person.

When medicines are expired of a pharmacy store, they have to return it to the manufacturing companies. The procedure takes a long time so the medicines are just shelved into the stores. When a long time takes pharmacy owners just keep all this medicines in a box unattended and thrown somewhere because they need to make place for new medicines.

The procedure of calling back expired medicines is so long that in between these things may happen. And yes when unattended medicines are found by a wrong person its misuse cannot be avoided.

The pharmaceutical wastes if not disposed off carefully can cause serious problems to the health and environment. Also at domestic level it is dumped in a dump yard or thrown outside someone's house or hospital or clinic or

pharmacy etc. If a rag picker or stray or pet animal or any person on the road side or at dump yard comes in contact with any used syringe or other sharp weapon or material, may contact any serious infection or disease like tetanus, HIV etc.

Few instances -

Due to the widespread improper disposal of pharmaceuticals, antibiotics are contaminating the aquatic as well as the terrestrial environment. According to them, hospital waste, out-of-date medicines from shops and unwanted household pharmaceuticals were not disposed properly and this was polluting water, grasslands and air.²

In medicine, 6% of prescriptions are for antimicrobial agents, while in veterinary medicine, more than 70% of prescriptions contains them. Therefore, nondegradation of antibiotics can theoretically lead to the development of multidrug resistant strains which can indirectly infect the humans, causing increased morbidity and mortality.³

Pharmaceutical Drug Rackets- instances

A fake swine flu medicine racket was busted by the drug control department in collaboration with the Gurgaon city police. The main accused and a group of people were administering swine flu preventive medicine outside the hospital on weekends. A trap was laid to get one vial (1ml). It had a label mentioning chicken pox/swine flu and the name of a reputable pharmaceutical company on it. When contacted the company's regional manager, denied manufacturing any such product for swine flu and lodged a complaint. On recovery of 49 vials and testing during interrogation, accused admitted to buying empty bottles from Delhi and filled some homeopathic medicine mixed with water.

In Chennai the Directorate of Drugs Control, as part of its continuing regular inspections, stumbled upon a racket that was ingeniously re-introducing expired drugs back into the market.⁴

The Directorate of Drugs Control cancelled in Chennai the licenses of four more firms for their involvement in the expired drugs racket and is on the verge of cracking down on another alleged spurious drug in the city.⁵

These rackets and its adverse effect is due to the lack of awareness of disposing pharmaceutical waste. WHO has given guidelines for the purpose of its disposal. Also categorization of such waste is also created where one needs to dispose off goods in such categories of dustbins. Also all the dump medicines are dumped outside the cities in a dumping ground by digging few and by incinerating. This always should take place away from the water bodies.

The dumping ground should be fenced properly so that nobody can trespass it. Additionally a security personal, police patrolling and other security measures must be taken to ensure that there is no trespass and theft of the waste for the purpose of any reselling or wrong activities.

Conclusion

Medicines are there for the purpose of healing us and if this healer only becomes our killer or proposes danger to us, it's of no use. It is really difficult to differentiate between real and fake or duplicate medicines. If proper measures and steps will be taken for the disposal of pharmaceutical waste at least this sort of rackets will slow down and gradually vanish from our country. It is necessary to have a basic literacy in the rural parts where expired medicines are sold by changing the date labels.

So a pharmaceutical waste management is necessary to curb this situation. If the WHO guidelines are properly followed and awareness of proper disposal of pharmacy products is to be properly given, then the menace caused by it will definitely cut down.

(Endnotes)

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3 Gurpreet Kaur Randhawa and Jagdev Singh Kullar, "Bioremediation of Pharmaceuticals, Pesticides, and Petrochemicals with Gomeya/Cow Dung", ISRN Pharmacology Volume 2011 (2011), ArticleID 362459, 7 pages, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.5402/2011/362459>; <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/isrn/2011/362459/>, last seen on 22 feb,2016.

4 RAMYA KANNAN AND SARAH HIDDLESTON, A drug racket that throws up some vital issues, Available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/a-drug-racket-that-throws-up-some-vital-issues/article304865.ece>, on 22 feb,2016.

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