Cytotoxic Drugs and Healthcare Worker Risks

Cancer drugs are saving patient’s lives but they may also be harming the lives of health care professionals as well. It is widely documented that exposure to these drugs puts workers at risk for developing adverse health effects. Contamination can happen from the time the drug is received, through preparation, administration and disposal. This exposure should be thought of as unacceptable since studies to educate and equip devices to minimize risks are readily available.

Who’s at Risk?

It is estimated that 8 million healthcare workers in the U.S. alone are exposed to hazardous drugs.

What Are the Risks?

2 out of 10 nurses who handled chemo drugs lost their pregnancy. According to one large study.

How Does Exposure Occur?

75% of wipe samples from several hospitals were found to be contaminated with at least one chemo agent. Contamination can happen during preparation, transport, administration and disposal of chemo drugs. The outside of vials may be coated from the manufacturer with contaminated drug. Then may leak, aerosolize, spill and spread during handling.

The primary sources of exposure are:

Pharmacy

Patient rooms

Proper Disposal

Cleaning

Proper Personal Protective Equipment

Use Protective Engineering Devices

Proper procedures are essential when handling hazardous drugs starting with measuring and mixing.Description taken from: FDA, WHO, NIOSH and other government and professional organizations.


