



CASE STUDY

St. Vincent's Private Hospital

Clinical Waste Reduction in Isolation Rooms and other areas of the Hospital



St. Vincent's Private Hospital (SVPH) is a 232 in-patient bed acute hospital providing a wide range of oncology, diagnostic imaging and surgical and medical services. SVPH joined the Green Healthcare Programme (GHCP) in late 2011 with work undertaken in early 2012. The hospital has actively implemented improvements recommended by the programme team.

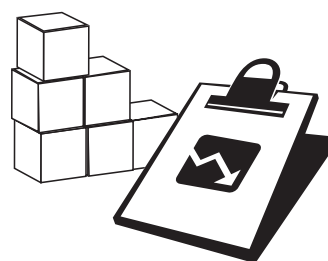
Prior to joining the programme the hospital had implemented a number of good practice measures to reduce the quantity of healthcare risk waste (HCRW) it generates and these are outlined in this case study.



Removal of clinical waste bins from all publicly accessible areas and the majority of isolation rooms



Review of clinical waste classification procedure for waste from isolation rooms



Low stock levels in isolation rooms

Removal of all clinical waste bins from publicly accessible areas (e.g. wards)

In general, patients and visitors will not be aware of the difference between healthcare risk waste and landfill waste. This often leads to non-risk waste being incorrectly placed in HCRW bins. This has been observed in numerous surveys carried out in the medical areas of healthcare facilities under the GHCP.

With this in mind, SVPH has removed all HCRW bins from publicly accessible areas (e.g. corridors, ward rooms etc.). In addition, this step has a positive hygiene control aspect, as healthcare risk waste is stored in only a small number of areas.

Review of healthcare risk waste classification procedures for waste from isolation rooms

In most hospitals, a common hygiene control procedure is that all waste generated in isolation rooms is treated as healthcare risk waste. Consequently, all waste generated by the patient (e.g. magazines, drink bottles, etc.) is treated as healthcare risk waste. The majority of patients isolated in hospitals have contact spread conditions (i.e. non droplet or airborne transmittable conditions). Thus, the patient's own waste would pose little risk in the spread of infection.

SVPH recognised that this practice resulted in considerable quantities of materials being unnecessarily treated as healthcare risk waste.

A HCRW bin is not provided in isolation rooms used for the treatment of patients isolated with contact spread infections. All healthcare risk waste generated in the treatment of patients is removed from the room (see box to right) with all other waste generated in the patient room treated as landfill waste or mixed recycling.

Where a patient is isolated for droplet or airborne transmitted conditions, the clinical waste bin is retained in the room with all waste treated as healthcare risk waste.

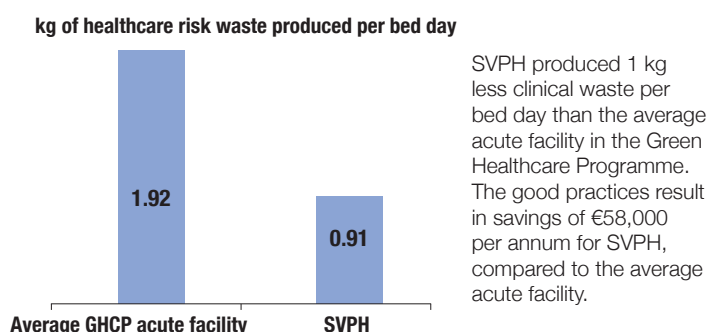


Management of healthcare risk waste

All healthcare risk waste (waste contaminated with bodily fluids) that is generated in the treatment of patients, including those isolated for contact spread conditions, is placed in a small yellow bag. This bag is then sealed and disposed of in a HCRW bin in the ward utility room.

Results of the SVPH waste survey and comparison with the average acute facility

Information gathered through waste surveys carried out under the Green Healthcare programme (GHCP)



Use of reusable HCRW bins

SVPH uses reusable bins for the storage of sharps and healthcare risk waste containing liquid. This has reduced the weight and number of HCRW bins disposed.

Maintaining low stock levels of materials in isolation rooms

A stock (e.g. box) of healthcare materials (e.g. gloves, gauzes) is often stored in a room or area. Upon the discharge of a patient from an isolation room, all equipment is sanitised and tagged and all disposable material, including unopened or unused materials, is disposed of as healthcare risk waste. Cleaning staff and infection control staff identified that substantial amounts of materials were being wasted in this manner.

Healthcare materials are no longer stored in isolation rooms and are brought in as needed. Where a material needs to be stored in the room, the stock level is kept to a minimum and replenished from the ward store room. As a result, the quantity of unused materials that is disposed of as healthcare risk waste has been greatly reduced.