



Healthy waste reduction – Part 2

by Roger Guttentag

In my March 2011 column, I discussed Web resources on waste reduction for health care facilities that were, in my opinion, oriented more to non-medical professionals such as recycling coordinators. In this month's column, I will now turn my attention on those sites that are more focused on reaching out to health-care practitioners such as doctors, nurses and health facility administrators. These resources are associated with sites promoting either sustainable or green healthcare initiatives. They cover generally the same waste reduction topics as discussed in last month's column though in greater depth.

American Hospital Association (AHA)

The AHA's Sustainability Roadmap for Hospitals is a great introduction to this topic. The home page for the Waste section provides a nice overview of the type

and quantities of non-regulated medical waste generated within hospital facilities including a pie chart showing typical waste composition – not surprisingly, paper is nearly half of it. At the bottom of this page is a set of links to more information on various topics such as the key factors that would drive a hospital waste reduction program, how to secure management support and create staff implementation teams and developing a waste management plan. This last topic includes some really valuable tools such as a detailed listing of recommended projects and a downloadable Microsoft Excel-based target-setting tool that includes instructions and ready-to-use data entry templates.

CleanMed 2011

CleanMed describes itself as the leading conference on creating environmentally sustainable healthcare operations. Look

for the link to CleanMed's Past that can be found at the upper right of the home page. This leads you to links to its previous conferences, starting in 2001, where you can download and review PDF files of previous speaker presentations covering a wide range of topics such as materials recycling, product reuse and environmentally-preferable purchasing.

Green Guide for Health Care (GGHC)

The GGHC is an ongoing project that started in 2004 as a joint project of Health Without Harm and the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems. Its overall goal is to provide institutions that function primarily for the delivery of healthcare services, such as hospitals, a way to establish quantifiable sustainability goals and standards governing all aspects of facility planning, design, construction and operations. Access to the GGHC is provided only through site registration and, according to GGHC, over 35,000 healthcare professionals have signed up to use it. After you have registered, there are three ways to use this site. First, you can download relevant sections of the GGHC for review. The site has a section that discusses how to apply the GGHC as well as links to the key reference documents that were used to develop it. The waste management section goes over its intent lists specific goals that should be followed, as well as how to document them, and recommends different technologies and strategies to consider. Lastly, another way to use this site is to participate in various events it sponsors such as webinars. Finally, you can register your

Web Address Directory

American Hospitals Association	http://tinyurl.com/AHASustain
CleanMed 2011	http://www.cleanmed.org/
Green Guide for Health Care	http://www.gghc.org/
Green Hospital Pilot	http://tinyurl.com/GreenHospitals
Practice Greenhealth	http://tinyurl.com/PracticeGreenhealth
The Canadian Coalition for Green Healthcare	http://www.greenhealthcare.ca/

project with GGHC and track its progress online.

Green Hospital Pilot (GHP)

The GHP is a program of the Healthcare Improvement Foundation, a Pennsylvania-based organization, with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). On the GHP site you can review and download short case studies illustrating environmental best practices that were developed with the assistance of this program that include addressing different recycling and waste minimization issues.

Practice Greenhealth (PGH)

PGH is a project of Hospitals for a Healthy Environment, which itself is a product of collaboration between the EPA and various organizations that are interested in promoting sustainable healthcare. The waste reduction section of PGH can be used like an online web manual. It has sections on how to get started, recycling, green purchasing and waste minimization. Each section is then broken down into specific sub-topics that are linked to pages that explain each one in greater detail. For example, the section conducting a waste assessment goes into the reasons why to conduct one, how they should be done, who should do it and when. Each of these discussions includes links to additional online resources that are relevant to it.

The Canadian Coalition for Green Healthcare (CCGH)

The CCGH was founded in 2000 by over 27 Canadian healthcare and environmental organizations for the purpose of promoting sustainable health services in Canada. This site should be considered the principal reference for obtaining more information on green health care initiatives within Canada. This includes links to CCHG sponsors, Canadian-based green resources and access to the CCHG Internet discussion list.

Final Thoughts

Anyone who has been involved with com-

mercial or institutional recycling programs will recognize how healthcare facilities often confront the same issues as those operating in other industries with regard to the non-hazardous materials they generate. However, they also have mandates that are unique to them as well such as how to safely handle infectious wastes as well as the need to address numerous regulatory, political and ethical obligations within a very tight economic environment. For these reasons, the big challenge, as I see it,

for healthcare waste reduction is not a lack of information on how to do it but making sure it gets the right amount of attention despite competition from so many other critical problems affecting the delivery of healthcare services.

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