

Anticancer Drug Handling Practices among Oncology Pharmacists in Sri Lanka: A Cross-sectional Study

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Oncology pharmacists play a vital role in handling cytotoxic drugs including the reconstitution of cytotoxic drugs. This study assessed the practices of oncology pharmacists in Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among oncology pharmacists (50) at Cytotoxic Reconstitution Units (CRU) in 21 Government Hospitals in Sri Lanka. A validated self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics were calculated using IBM SPSS (Version 25) software. The ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee at the Open University of Sri Lanka. The majority of pharmacists were males (96%, n = 48). Most pharmacists (78%, n = 39) had a Certificate of Proficiency in Pharmacy and had over 5 years of experience working as hospital pharmacists (78%, n = 39). The majority of the pharmacists (86%, n = 43) had received formal training in handling anti-cancer drugs. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for handling anti-cancer drugs were used by 78% (n = 39) of participants. More than half of the participants responded that they were using different sources such as clinical plans (86%, n = 43), Bed Head Tickets (78%, n = 39), previous prescriptions (84%, n = 42), and discussions with other healthcare professionals (80%, n = 40) and patients (56%, n = 28) to ensure the accuracy of the prescription. Almost all the pharmacists (96%, n = 48) were using product information leaflets when carrying out volume dilution of anticancer medicines. The majority of the pharmacists (96%, n = 48) packed the anticancer drug waste in sealed packets with hazard symbols. This study concludes that oncology pharmacists at government hospitals had good practices for handling anticancer drugs. The provision of periodical training, necessary facilities, and regular monitoring is recommended to uplift the skills.

Keywords: *practices, anticancer drugs, pharmacist, oncology, cytotoxic*