

KAREN ATTARD
MAURICE ZARB ADAMI
LILIAN M. AZZOPARDI
ANTHONY SERRACINO-INGLOTT

Management of consumers' pharmaceutical waste in a pharmacy setting - Part II

Incompatible products and liquid medicines

Products that might cause particular hazards if mixed should be kept separately in order to protect from consequences of mixing incompatible products. Thus, liquids, syrups, suspensions, inhalers, creams, ointments will all have to be returned directly to the pharmacist in their original containers and stored in a metal cabinet until the date of collection by a waste carrier.¹

Waste containers

As part of this scheme, consumers will receive durable re-sealable plastic bags to place their pharmaceutical waste. Special waste containers (Figure 1) will be placed in front of pharmacies. They should be made of a metal resistant to corrosion and fire and less prone to theft. The colour

chosen (in this case green) should be such that makes the container distinguishable from post boxes and garbage bins. Once the lid is opened, the pharmaceutical waste can be placed and it cannot be retrieved again. Labels will clearly show the purpose of this container and it will instruct what can be disposed of in this manner and what cannot be disposed as such.

The Returned Medicines Register

The 'Returned Medicines Register' (Table 1) is used to keep a record of all the medicines returned directly to the pharmacy. It should be in the form of carbon copy paper so as to give a receipt to the Waste collector upon collection of the waste.² The Returned Medicines Register should be concise but still containing all the relevant information needed upon collection, while not very time-consuming.

Pharmaceutical waste management

It is imperative to distinguish between hazardous medicines and hazardous pharmaceutical waste. They will all be ultimately incinerated, but it is important for them to be segregated at the point of collection.

Hazardous medicines

Hazardous medicines should be returned to the pharmacist by hand. The returned medicines should be left in their original packaging and they should be placed in the specialised sealable bags.

Once returned to the pharmacist, they should be stored in a lockable metal cabinet and logged on the 'Returned Medicine Register'.

Non-hazardous solid dosage forms

Non-hazardous solid dosage forms such as tablets, capsules, caplets, patches and powders (sachets) should be disposed of in their original packaging in the waste container found in front of the pharmacies (Figure 1). Any quantity may be discarded in this manner provided that they are still in their original packaging and they are not hazardous in nature.

Non-hazardous non-solid dosage forms

This refers to syrups, suspensions, creams, ointments and inhalers. These should be left in their original packaging and placed in the special sealable bags before returned to the pharmacist. However these are not disposed of in the waste container to minimise the risk of contamination and mixing of

Figure 1: Open Pharmaceutical Waste Container



