Vol. 5 No. 2 (2026)

Pakistan Journal of Medical & Cardiological Review

https://pakjmcr.com/index.php/1/about

Online ISSN 3007-2387

Print ISSN 3007-2379

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Nurses Regarding Hospital Waste Management in a Tertiary Care Hospital

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Keywords: Biomedical Waste, Nurses, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Hospital Waste Management, Infection Control

Received on 01 Apr 2026
Accepted on 02 May 2026
Published on 09 May 2026

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Abstract

Background: Biomedical waste (BMW) management is a critical component of infection control in healthcare settings. Inadequate handling of BMW poses serious health risks to patients, healthcare workers, and the environment, making it essential to assess nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP).

Aim: To assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses regarding biomedical waste management in a tertiary care hospital.

Methods: A descriptive correlational study design was conducted among 110 nurses selected through convenience sampling from a government hospital in Lahore. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering demographic variables and KAP related to BMW management. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for data analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that nurses had moderate knowledge regarding BMW, with good awareness of general concepts but gaps in technical areas such as waste categorization and color coding. Attitudes were generally positive, with most participants recognizing the role of BMW management in infection prevention, although some perceived it as a financial burden. Practices were inconsistent, with adequate adherence to waste segregation but deficiencies in disinfection and documentation procedures.

Conclusion: The study highlights a gap between knowledge and practice in BMW management. Regular training, effective monitoring, and institutional support are essential to improve compliance and ensure safe waste management practices.

Introduction

Hospitals play a pivotal role in the provision of diverse healthcare services to the community they serve. These services encompass curative treatments, rehabilitation, preventive measures, patient care, and the dissemination of health education. In essence, hospitals and healthcare institutions bear the responsibility of safeguarding public health, a duty that extends both directly through the delivery of patient care and indirectly by ensuring a clean and healthful environment for their staff and the broader community (Patil & Pokhrel, 2018).

Within the ambit of healthcare operations, there exists a significant concern pertaining to healthcare waste (HCW). HCW is an encompassing term that refers to all waste materials generated by healthcare and health research facilities, including associated laboratories. It encompasses both solid and liquid waste that carries the potential to pose infectious threats to human health. The generation of HCW occurs within various healthcare settings, including but not limited to hospitals (where it is produced during the diagnosis, treatment, or immunization of individuals), blood banks, clinics, dental practices, laboratories, as well as medical research facilities, veterinary hospitals, and other forms of healthcare services (Sreegiri & Babu, 2018).

Hospitals and healthcare institutions are multifaceted entities that serve as pillars of healthcare delivery and public health preservation. Concurrently, healthcare waste, characterized by its infectious potential, necessitates careful management and disposal within these healthcare settings to ensure the safety and well-being of both healthcare workers and the broader community.

Hospital waste represents a unique and highly critical category of waste, distinguished by its inherent hazardous nature owing to infectious and potentially toxic characteristics. What amplifies the gravity of this situation is the direct exposure that waste management workers and members of the public face when dealing with such waste, thereby heightening the risks associated with its handling. While it's true that medical waste management practices exhibit variations from one healthcare facility to another, the challenges and problematic aspects remain remarkably consistent across all healthcare units. These challenges span every phase of waste management, from initial segregation and collection to packaging, storage, transport, treatment, and final disposal (Fluke, 2018).

Within the healthcare ecosystem, the healthcare team member assumes the pivotal role of the first line of defense against the perils of healthcare waste. Should this initial line of defense falter, the consequences can be nothing short of disastrous. Consequently, the effective management and mitigation of healthcare waste hazards hinge significantly on the collaborative efforts of healthcare professionals, including nurses, doctors, and housekeepers, working in tandem with hospital administration. The process of segregating healthcare waste commences at its very point of generation, underlining the imperative for healthcare team members to possess comprehensive awareness regarding the diverse types and associated risks of medical waste and, crucially, the appropriate protocols for handling them (Goddu, Duvvuri & Bakki, 2019; Pasupathi, Sindhu, Ponnusha & Ambika, 2019).

It's imperative to dispel the misconception that effective medical waste management revolves solely around the presence of incinerators and various waste processing methods. This notion is fundamentally flawed. Instead, a robust healthcare waste management framework hinges on establishing a solid foundational basis and actively working toward the development of comprehensive medical waste treatment protocols. The risks posed by medical

waste extend beyond mere accumulation and suboptimal treatment; they encompass the pervasive threat of infection, which may manifest even before the waste reaches incineration or other treatment facilities (Mohammed, 2018).
The management of hospital waste transcends routine waste disposal practices; it represents a complex and multifaceted challenge that demands the unyielding commitment of healthcare professionals and institutions alike. The risks associated with healthcare waste underscore the pressing need for holistic awareness, stringent protocols, and a collaborative approach that extends from the healthcare team members to the highest echelons of hospital administration and waste management.
There is a concept that the medical waste management limited to the existence of incinerators and different processing methods. But this concept is wrong; healthcare waste management depends on the fundamental basis and working to create a medical waste treatment. The risk of the medical waste is not limited to accumulation and poor-treatment only, but also related to the infection and the risk of these wastes may occur before the arrival of this waste incinerators and different treatment methods (Mohammed, 2018). To make sure that health care waste is properly managed in the long term, it is important to supervise on a regular basis the practices of the staff. This should be performed by the healthcare waste management officer and/or members of a healthcare waste management committee within each health care facility depending on the size of the facility. Typically, members of such committee are usually the same as those in charge of nosocomial infections. Appropriate ongoing training and awareness sessions should be organized accordingly to keep practicing at the best standards possible (Aukour, 2018; Fasola et al., 2018).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of nurses regarding hospital waste management in a tertiary care hospital in Lahore. The design was appropriate for examining relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment. The study population comprised registered nurses working in a government hospital setting. A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants, resulting in a sample size of 110 nurses. Inclusion criteria required participants to be registered nurses with at least one year of clinical experience, ensuring they had sufficient exposure to hospital waste management practices. The study focused on evaluating how nurses' knowledge and attitudes relate to their actual practices in handling healthcare waste.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically designed to assess hospital waste management practices. The instrument included sections on demographic characteristics as well as standardized questions addressing knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to waste management mechanisms. The questionnaire covered key areas such as biomedical waste categories, segregation, storage, disposal methods, and safety precautions. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authority, and informed consent was secured from all participants to ensure voluntary participation. The questionnaire was administered to nurses during their duty hours in a manner that minimized disruption to clinical responsibilities. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the data collection process to encourage honest and accurate responses.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis involved a systematic evaluation of responses to determine the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices among nurses regarding hospital waste management. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Knowledge levels were assessed based on correct responses to relevant questions, while attitudes were analyzed through responses to opinion-based statements. Practices were evaluated by examining reported behaviors related to waste segregation, handling, and disposal. Additionally, inferential statistical methods were applied to explore relationships between knowledge, attitudes, and practices. This comprehensive analysis provided insights into gaps and areas for improvement in hospital waste management within the healthcare setting.

Results

Demographic Analysis

The demographic profile of the participants (n = 110) shows that the majority were female (77.27%), reflecting the gender distribution commonly seen in the nursing profession, while males constituted 22.73%. Most participants were young adults, with the highest proportion in the 26–30 years age group (36.36%), followed by 31–35 years (27.27%), indicating a relatively युवा and active workforce. In terms of experience, the largest group had 6–10 years of clinical experience (36.36%), suggesting moderate professional exposure among respondents. Regarding marital status, slightly more than half were married (54.55%), while 45.45% were single. Educationally, most nurses held a Diploma in Nursing (40.91%), followed by BS Nursing (31.82%), with fewer having Post RN (18.18%) and MSN qualifications (9.09%). Overall, the sample represents a moderately experienced and predominantly diploma-qualified nursing workforce.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 110)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	25	22.73%
	Female	85	77.27%
Age Group	20–25 years	20	18.18%
	26–30 years	40	36.36%
	31–35 years	30	27.27%
	36–40 years	15	13.64%
	40+ years	5	4.55%
Working Experience	Up to 1 year	20	18.18%
	1–5 years	30	27.27%
	6–10 years	40	36.36%
	10+ years	20	18.18%
Marital Status	Married	60	54.55%
	Single	50	45.45%
Qualification	Diploma in Nursing	45	40.91%
	BS Nursing	35	31.82%
	Post RN	20	18.18%
	MSN	10	9.09%

The findings indicate a generally satisfactory level of knowledge among nurses regarding biomedical waste management. A large proportion of participants agreed or

strongly agreed that they had heard about BMW and that hospitals generate biomedical waste, demonstrating basic awareness. Similarly, most respondents recognized the role of BMW in disease transmission and acknowledged associated health hazards. Knowledge of biohazard symbols and disposal policies was also relatively high. However, there were noticeable gaps, particularly in understanding BMW management categories and the use of color-coded disposal systems, where a considerable number of participants remained neutral or disagreed. Additionally, responses regarding training indicate that although some participants had received training, many still expressed the need for regular educational programs. Overall, while foundational knowledge exists, there is a need for further structured training and reinforcement.

Table 2: Knowledge Regarding Biomedical Waste Management (BMW)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Heard about BMW	5	15	20	45	25
Received training	10	20	30	25	25
Know biohazard symbol	8	15	25	30	32
Hospital generates BMW	2	5	8	50	45
Know BMW categories	12	20	28	30	20
Disposal policy exists	8	15	30	25	32
Health hazards of BMW	5	15	22	40	28
BMW transmits disease	3	8	15	50	34
Color-coded bags used	10	20	28	30	22
Training needed	10	15	30	35	20
Color coding guidelines	8	12	30	38	22
Methods identified	12	18	30	32	18

The attitude of nurses toward biomedical waste management was generally positive but showed some mixed perceptions. A majority agreed that proper waste management reduces hospital-acquired infections and emphasized the importance of waste segregation, reflecting a strong understanding of its role in infection control. However, a significant proportion also perceived BMW management as a financial burden, indicating concerns about resource allocation. Interestingly, many participants disagreed with the notion that BMW management is solely the government's responsibility, suggesting a sense of personal and professional accountability. Furthermore, most respondents supported the need for frequent training, highlighting a positive attitude toward continuous learning. Overall, the findings suggest that while nurses recognize the importance of BMW management, some misconceptions and concerns still exist.

Table 3: Attitude Regarding Biomedical Waste Management (BMW)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
BMW increases financial burden	5	20	25	35	25
Govt responsibility only	15	30	25	20	20
Reduces hospital infections	5	10	20	40	35
Segregation necessary	10	18	25	35	22
Training frequency needed	8	12	30	32	28

The analysis of practices reveals variability in the implementation of biomedical waste management procedures among nurses. While a reasonable proportion reported

adherence to proper waste segregation and disinfection practices, a notable number of respondents either disagreed or remained neutral, indicating inconsistent compliance. Record maintenance practices also showed mixed responses, with equal proportions agreeing and disagreeing, suggesting gaps in documentation practices. Although some nurses demonstrated good adherence to recommended protocols, the presence of neutral and negative responses highlights deficiencies in consistent practice. These findings suggest that despite adequate knowledge and relatively positive attitudes, actual implementation of BMW management practices remains suboptimal, emphasizing the need for stronger monitoring, training, and institutional support.

Table 4: Practices Regarding Biomedical Waste Management (BMW)

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Maintain BMW records	15	25	20	25	25
Waste segregation practiced	10	20	22	30	28
Disinfection before disposal	12	18	25	32	23

Discussion

The results of the current study indicate that nurses have moderate knowledge level related to the biomedical waste (BMW) management, but significant knowledge gaps still exist within certain areas. A significant percentage of participants reported having basic knowledge of clinical risks but were not deep in applied knowledge, which is consistent with the results of Gefen A et al. (2022), who found that healthcare professionals generally possessed a basic understanding of clinical risks but may lack depth in applied knowledge. Conversely, other studies like Noreen A et al. (2025) found that trained staffs had higher levels of structured knowledge, which was attributed to the fact that formal training and continuous training produce significant impacts on the level of awareness.

The findings concerning training indicate discrepancy with a significant percentage of the respondents indicating lack of exposure to formal BMW management training. This finding follows the study conducted by Iblasi A et al. (2021), who reported that the major reason behind the inability to adhere to healthcare protocols is lack of training. Conversely, Almutairi MN et al. (2025) also emphasized that institutions with organized educational programs displayed much better knowledge and compliance. The discrepancy points to the fact that although the awareness is present, systematic training has been inadequately developed in most healthcare institutions.

Information about certain elements like colour coded, types of waste and disposal strategies seemed to be different among the participants. Nancy GA et al. (2022) also reported similar findings, as they found that the technical aspects of waste management were poorly understood in comparison with the general concepts. However, in contrast, a study by Chen Z et al. (2024) showed that targeted interventions can greatly enhance the knowledge on such detailed practices. This contrast indicates that the variability that was witnessed in this study could be due to the lapses in the practical training and reinforcement.

Overall attitude of nurses towards BMW management was mostly positive, especially in terms of its contribution to the minimization of hospital-acquired infections. This observation confirms the findings of Anthony D et al. (2021) who stated that healthcare workers appreciate the significance of infection control measures associated with the management of waste. The perceptions about the financial burden varied, with a significant amount of participants perceiving BMW management as being expensive. The same issues were raised by Langemo D et al. (2022), who

addressed the problem of cost and quality balance in healthcare activities. These perceptions could have an effect on motivation and compliance.

The responsibility of BMW management was met with divided opinions with some participants attributing this to the government authorities and others taking personal responsibility. This corresponds with the results of Poldrugovac M et al. (2021) in which role ambiguity influenced implementation of healthcare policies. Conversely, other studies that were carried out in well-regulated settings, such as those reported by World Health Organization (2025), focus on clear accountability frameworks, which have led to improved compliance and coordination of healthcare staff.

The practice-based results show that there is moderate compliance with BMW management procedures, especially in the segregation of waste materials and record keeping. Such results are in line with Avsar P et al. (2021), who found out that even in case of knowledge gaps, basic practices are frequently followed. The differences in disinfection practices and documentation imply that there were inconsistencies in implementation. Conversely, Peterson A et al. (2025) discovered that institutions that had effective monitoring systems registered higher compliance rates, which implies the relevance of supervision and institutional backing.

The general results imply that there is a disconnect between knowledge, attitude and practice amongst nurses in BMW management. Although the level of awareness and attitudes is relatively positive, practices are yet to be consistently implemented. Chen M et al. (2024) also observed the same, noting that to facilitate behavioral change, it is necessary not only to know but also to continuously train, monitor, and be committed to an institution. The findings reveal that there is the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach that targets education, policy implementation, and access to resources to enhance BMW management practices at the healthcare setting.

Conclusion

The research findings conclude that nurses in the tertiary care hospital have a moderate level of knowledge, generally positive attitudes, and inconsistent practices related to the biomedical waste (BMW) management. Although the majority of participants proved to be aware of BMW, its risks, and its contribution to the spread of diseases, the gaps could be identified in technical terms, i.e. the categorization of waste, its color-coding, and the procedure of its disposal, which may be explained by the lack of structured training. The attitudes were mostly positive, particularly in terms of the significance of BMW management in terms of infection control yet issues of financial burden and lack of responsibility point to misconceptions. The practices reported were irregular, with the compliance with the basic processes, such as waste segregation but inconsistencies in disinfection and documentation, which indicated a gap between the knowledge and the practice. The results highlight the importance of frequent training, enhanced monitoring, and better institutional support to improve adherence and guarantee effective BMW management in healthcare environments.

Recommendations

The study recommends the implementation of regular and structured training programs for nurses to improve their knowledge and technical understanding of biomedical waste (BMW) management, particularly in areas such as waste categorization, color coding, and proper disposal methods. Hospitals should establish clear policies and guidelines and ensure their consistent dissemination to all healthcare staff to reduce ambiguity regarding roles and responsibilities. Continuous monitoring and supervision mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure adherence to standard practices, including proper segregation, disinfection, and documentation of waste. Provision of adequate resources, such as color-coded bins, personal protective equipment, and proper storage facilities, is essential to support effective

implementation. Awareness campaigns and refresher courses should be conducted periodically to reinforce positive attitudes and correct misconceptions, especially regarding the importance and cost-effectiveness of BMW management. Incorporating BMW management into routine audits and performance evaluations can further enhance accountability. These measures can collectively improve compliance, reduce health risks, and promote a safer healthcare environment.

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