



American Nurses Association-Maine

info@anamaine.org
www.anamaine.org

RESOLUTION

TITLE: ON REDUCTION OF HEALTH CARE POLLUTION

WHEREAS,

The Code of Ethics for Nurses states that “the nurse participates in establishing, maintaining, and improving healthcare environments and conditions of employment conducive to the provision of quality health care and consistent with the values of the profession through individual and collective action,”¹ and

WHEREAS,

Modern technology and common medical practices although not developed or practiced with the intent to harm but to help, may in some instances contribute to the very illnesses medicine and nursing seeks to heal, and

WHEREAS,

There is a genuine lack of awareness in the healthcare community on the effect of such practices on the health of the patient, community, environment, and on healthcare workers themselves, and

WHEREAS,

Some of these practices include the indiscriminant use of incineration of medical waste which is a source of environmental dioxin, cadmium, mercury and other toxic substances, and the use of products containing glutaraldehyde (ie. Cidex), latex, PVC's (polyvinyl chloride), DEHP (di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate),² latex, and

WHEREAS,

The use of these products often effect the most vulnerable populations in our society, often the developing fetus and the premature neonate,³ therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION-MAINE:

1. Will join the efforts of the Maine Hospital Association and related environmentally sensitive organizations to make the environmental practices of the health care industry safer, and
2. Will collaborate with state and federal agencies, legislators and policy makers to set standards for dioxin emissions from medical waste incinerators, to limit the amount of medical and non-medical waste incinerated and at the same time increase the use of non-incineration methods of medical waste disposal, and

3. Will adopt the statements of Maine's "Facility Specific Pollution Prevention Agreement 2001" ⁴, and encourage the processes that are needed to implement the changes outlined in that document, and
4. Will collaborate with state and federal agencies, legislators and policy makers to limit the use of PVC containing products (the major source of DEHP) to instances where no other alternative is available, and
5. Will collaborate with state and federal agencies, legislators and policy makers to completely eliminate the use of mercury, to strive toward a latex safe health care environment and when possible use alternatives for glutaraldehyde, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT: the AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION-MAINE will promote the education of nurses and other health care personnel about the nature of environmental hazards and about a means toward reduction of health care pollution.

REFERENCES:

1. American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics*.
<http://www.nursingworld.org/ethics/chcode.htm>
2. Sattler, B. "Environmental Health in the Health Care Setting," *The American Nurse*, March/April 2003; 26-40.
3. Sattler, B. "Environmental Health in the Health Care Setting," *The American Nurse*, March/April 2003; 26-40.
4. *Facility Specific Pollution Prevention Agreement*.
5. Everson, Joan, RN, APN,C & Long, Karen, RN, APN,C. New Jersey Nurses Association.

SPONSORED BY:

AUTHOR: Bettie D. Kettell, RN, HEM.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

ADOPTED: 10/3/03