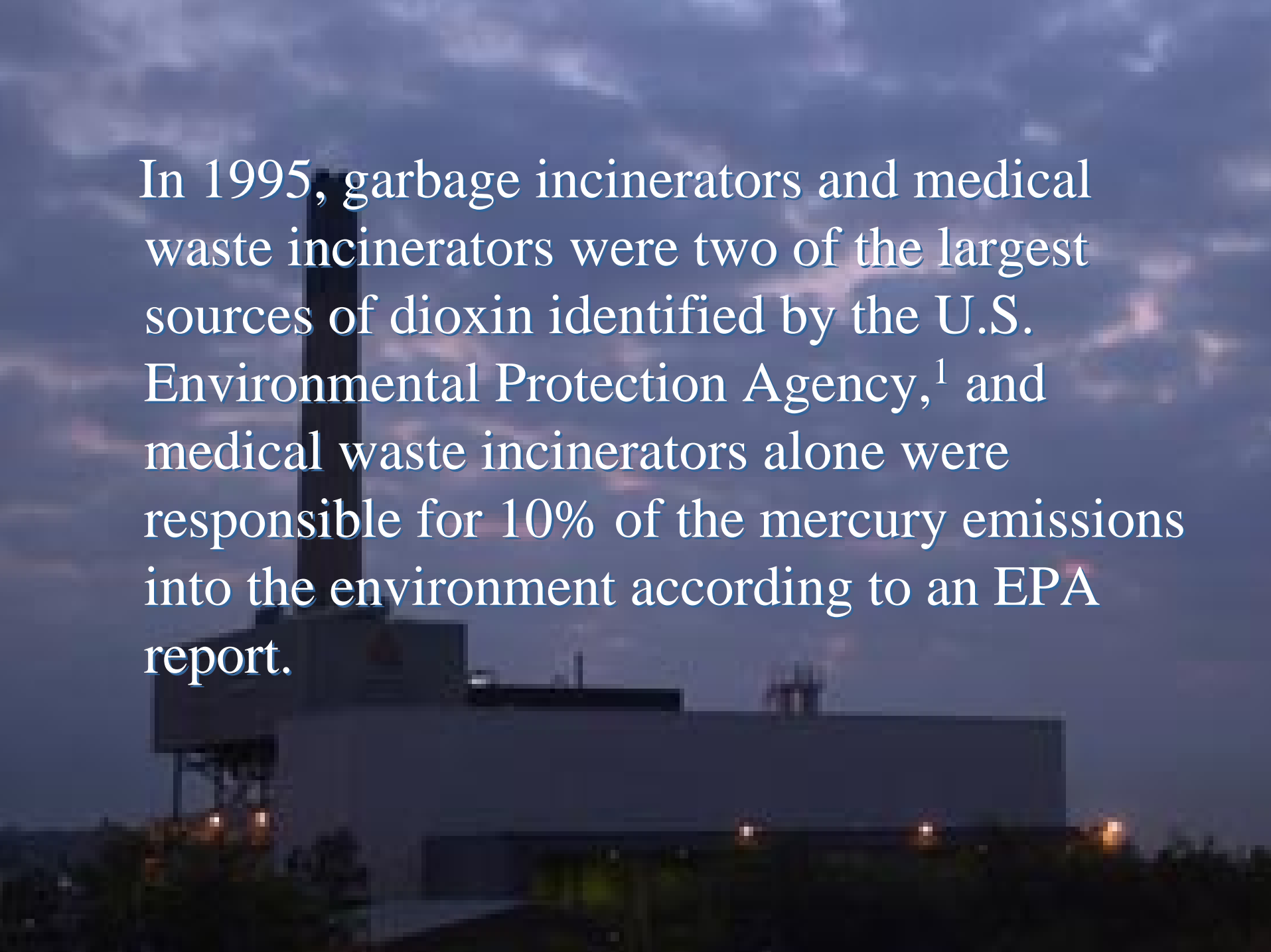


# Health Care Without Harm and H2E

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In 1995, garbage incinerators and medical waste incinerators were two of the largest sources of dioxin identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,<sup>1</sup> and medical waste incinerators alone were responsible for 10% of the mercury emissions into the environment according to an EPA report.

Of all the places  
to dispose of  
**hospital waste**  
our food shouldn't  
be one of them.

**Our hospitals should  
stop poisoning us.**

Mercury in tuna fish. Dioxin in milk. Medical waste incinerators burn PVC plastics and medical supplies that contain mercury. The dioxin and mercury go up the smokestack, land on fields and water—sometimes thousands of miles away from the source—and come back to us in meat, fish and dairy products. New information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency names medical waste incineration as a leading source of mercury and dioxin contamination of our food supply.

In light of this news, you'd think the leaders of the American Hospital Association (AHA) would do everything in their power to solve this problem. Instead, they hired a high-powered consultant who worked to weaken the EPA's rules on medical waste incineration and to spread misinformation about the devastating health impacts of dioxin.

Dioxin is a highly toxic chemical that is stored in our body fat. When a woman becomes pregnant, it can disrupt the healthy development of the fetus. When a woman breast feeds her baby, dioxin gets released and transferred to the



*Of the millions of tons of medical waste that hospitals throw away, 2% or less actually needs to be burned. PVC plastics used in tubing and IV bags have highly toxic dioxin when incinerated.*



*Here's something to clear up: Mercury and dioxin from hospital incinerators get deposited in water or on land. The toxins then concentrate in the muscle and fat tissues of the fish and cows that we feed our children.*



baby. The EPA reports that adults consume 300-600 times the "safe" amount of dioxin, with breast feeding babies getting 15,000-30,000 times that amount.

The tragedy is that incineration is completely unnecessary for 98% of hospital waste. Nearly all medical waste can safely be separated, recycled and reused and disposed of with other cost-effective means.

It's time for the American Hospital Association to take a leadership position to help their member hospitals stop poisoning the very communities they serve. In the meantime, it's your right to know the practices of your local hospital. Call them and ask if they or a sub-contractor incinerates their waste.

The 70 organizations that make up Health Care Without Harm want to help the AHA get a second opinion on medical waste. We have already worked with dozens of hospitals to prevent toxic pollution. And we stand ready to work with any and all hospitals who want to remove medical waste from their plates—without putting it onto ours.

**Call your local hospital today, and ask what they are doing to end dioxin and mercury poisoning.**

Health Care Without Harm is a nonprofit working to reform the public health and environmental practices of the health care industry. Some of the 70 organizations include the American Hospital Association, the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Breast Cancer Fund.

**HEALTH CARE without HARM**

For more information, contact:  
Center for Health, Environment and Justice,  
P.O. Box 6800, Falls Church, VA 22044  
www.hcwharm.org/healthcare PH: 703.272.2249

# Hazardous Chemicals



- Glutaraldehyde
- Ethylene Oxide (EtO)
- Solvents: alcohols, xylene
- Toxic Cleaning Chemicals

# Health Care Without Harm's Mission

- To transform the health care industry worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment.

# Health Care Without Harm's Goals:

1. To work with a wide range of constituencies for an ecologically sustainable health care system;
2. To promote policies, practices and laws that eliminate incineration of medical waste, minimize the amount and toxicity of all waste generated, and promote the use of safer materials and treatment practices;
3. To phase out the use of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) plastics and persistent toxic chemicals in health care and to build momentum for a broader PVC phase out campaign;

# Health Care Without Harm's Goals (cont.):

4. To phase out the use of mercury in all aspects of the health care industry;
5. To develop health-based standards for medical waste management and to recognize and implement the public's right to know about chemical use in the health care industry;

# Health Care Without Harm's Goals (cont.);

6. To develop just siting and transportation guidelines that conform to the principles of environmental justice: No communities should be poisoned by medical waste treatment and disposal;
7. To develop an effective collaboration and communication structure among campaign allies



# Health Care Without Harm Campaign

Over 440 member organization

Over 50 countries

# HCWH Infrastructure

- Board
- Steering Committee (Work Group reps)
- Exec Director
- Staff
- **Work Groups**

# **Safer Materials Work Group**

- Moving the US and European markets toward safer materials and helping define the characteristics of those materials.
- Focusing on PVC, brominated flame retardants, and other PBTs

# Health Care Market shift to safer plastics:

- **Hospira Inc.** became the first leading supplier to launch a full-service, non-PVC I.V. container. The new container also weighs 40-60% less than other flexible I.V. containers, resulting in significant waste reduction.
- **Baxter International Inc.** announced a new specialty non-PVC/DEHP I.V. system. Hospitals in the U.S. spend about \$1.2 billion per year on I.V. products, and Baxter and Hospira represent about 90% of the market.



# Catholic Health East Product Selection Criteria

- Mercury free
- Plastics PVC or DEHP free
- Product and packaging recyclable
- Recycled content
- Minimal packaging



**KAISER PERMANENTE®**

## Chemical Policy:

Calls for avoiding the use of carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins, and persistent bio-accumulative toxic chemicals (PBTs). KP will work to achieve this policy for our own facilities, and we want to broadcast our intent in order to drive innovation in the marketplace.

# **Group Purchasing Organizations (GPO) Work Group**

- **Works with hospitals/health systems to reduce environmental impact through purchasing decisions, by implementing Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) policies, setting purchasing goals, and working within Product Evaluation Committees.**
- **HCWH is also working with the leading group purchasing organizations (GPOs) in an effort to reduce the environmental impact of products.**

# Group Purchasing Organizations

- GPOs are uniquely positioned to identify and provide products that are less toxic and that produce less waste.
- GPOs can move manufacturers and suppliers to produce green goods and services that can perform as well and are priced comparatively to their environmentally inferior counterparts.



# Environmentally Preferable Products

- Less Toxic (mercury-free)
- Fewer Allergens (latex-free)
- Less Packaging (buy in bulk)
- Recycled content (paper supplies)
- Reusable (bedpans, mattresses)
- Energy Efficient (appliances)
- Many more...

# Medical Waste Treatment Work Group

- Promotes policies, practices and laws that eliminate incineration of medical waste and encourage the use of safer materials and treatment practices
- Advocates for the use of alternative medical waste treatment technologies
- The workgroup also provides organizing and technical assistance to local groups in closing medical waste incinerators in their communities.

# Problems with Hospital Waste

## TOXICITY

- Dioxin (PVC plastics and other chlorinated items)
- Mercury and other heavy metals
- Hazardous chemicals in labs, cleaners, pesticides

## INCREASING VOLUME

- Large amounts of single-use, disposable items
- Not enough source reduction, reuse and recycling
- Clinicians throwing away non-infectious waste in red bags.

Beth Israel Medical Center saved over \$1,000,000 per year when they engaged in good waste segregation and waste reduction practices

# Regional Organizers Work Group (ROW)

- Implements HCWH's mission and goals locally in the following regions: greater Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Washington DC, California, Michigan, Montana and Alaska.
- Moving HCWH locally on issues such as mercury, PVC, and PBT reduction and elimination, medical waste issues, and health care justice.

# HCWH Food Work Group

- Working with hospitals to adopt food procurement policies that: provide nutritionally improved food for patients, staff, visitors, and the general public
- Create food systems that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible - thereby demonstrating an understanding of the inextricable links between human, public, and ecosystem health.

# Menu of Options: Steps to Healthier Food in Hospitals

- ❑ Antibiotic-free meat/poultry
- ❑ rBGH-free milk
- ❑ Organic and other certified foods
- ❑ Certified coffees
- ❑ Locally-sourcing food
- ❑ Fast-food free zone
- Farmers' markets
- Hospital gardens
- Compost and reduction of food waste
- Hospital food policy
- Vending machine use



# Green Building (GBH) Work Group

- Seeks to improve the impact on the environment resulting from the design, construction and operation of health care facilities.
- Promotes the use of green and healthy building materials and practices in the programming, design, construction and maintenance.
- The workgroup further seeks to use this work to provide leadership and leverage improvements in the environmental impact of all building construction.



# Green Guidelines for Health Care

- Engaging
  - Architects
  - Builders
  - Manufacturers

# **Nurses Work Group**

- Focuses on the role nurses play in the Health Care Without Harm campaign.
- Educational efforts: RN No Harm
- Chemical Exposure Survey
- The Luminary Project
- Moving the national nurses associations

# **NURSING**

## **Environmental Health Resolutions**

- Pollution Prevention/Toxics Reduction in health care
- Precautionary Principle
- Ban of non-therapeutic antibiotics in animal feed
- Creation of Environmental Health Principles
- Adoption of Chemical Policies (June 2006)

# Global Projects and International Outreach (GPIO)

- Works internationally with members and supporters to develop collaborative strategies and projects to advance HCWH's goals.
- Provides technical assistance, training and international networking opportunities, public education, media work and advocacy
- Influences international organizations and financial institutions to cease the funding of medical waste incineration and to instead promote safe alternatives.

# Working Collaboratively Domestically and Internationally

- REACH
- POPs Treaty
- Mercury bans
- State PBT phase outs
- Local dioxin ordinances
- BFR in California
- Precautionary Principle in SF

# Hospitals for a Healthy Environment “H2E”

American Hospital Association

American Nurses Association

Health Care Without Harm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

# H2E GOALS



- Virtually eliminate mercury waste by year 2005
- Reduce total waste volume by 33% by year 2005, by 50% by 2010
- Identify and reduce PBT chemicals and other hazardous substances in hospitals through pollution prevention and waste reduction