

EVALUATION FORM TO TEST THE REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE FOR A SAFE HANDLING OF CYTOTOXIC AGENTS.

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Cytotoxic agents are increasingly used for the treatment of cancer. Evidence has risen that the nursing staff are exposed to potential dangers when preparing and administering such drugs. The necessity for strict protective measures has now been recognised. In Belgium, specific legal rules are not issued yet. A working party has edicted detailed recommendations for a safe handling of cytotoxic agents. Nurses, physicians and specialists of occupational safety have written an education booklet. It contains some forty pages and is distributed among personnel exposed to potential hazards as well as in nursing schools.

To make sure that the proper information has been got an evaluation form was designed. Multiple choice and open questions cover the whole field of the recommendations. The first items concern the action of cytotoxic drugs, routes of contamination as well as possible side-effects on handlers (causticity, antigenicity, mutagenicity, teratogenicity and carcinogenicity). The knowledge of personal regulations is checked (selection, eviction, register, formation, medical health surveillance). The test considers guidelines about safe preparation : rooms, material, protective equipment, methods of work (general and peculiar operational procedures related to ampoules, bottles and infusions). Others questions concern safety precautions that nurses have to take at the patient's bed : material and protection equipment, proper modes of injection, elimination of wastes. Finally, the test inquiries about measures to decontaminate persons and material (skin, mucosae, respiratory tract, floors and objects).

An evaluation form is presented to check the required knowledge for a safe handling of cytotoxic agents. This test is likely to point out possible educational gaps of nurses and consequently to draw attention on the need of additional specific formation programmes.