

TOPIC: **IN SUPPORT OF HOSPITALS ELIMINATING THE USE OF MERCURY, PVC, DEHP, AND TO BETTER REGULATE THE USE OF INCINERATION AS A FORM OF WASTE MANAGEMENT**

SUBMITTED BY: **The Chapter of California Nursing Students' Association at California State University, Long Beach**

AUTHORS: **Tiffany Schnorr and Jessica DeVries**

Abstract

Hippocrates teaches us, as healthcare professionals to “First, do no harm.” Therefore, the abuse the healthcare industry inflicts on the environment should no longer go unseen. The materials used for medical supplies and the way which those supplies are managed once they become waste, are not only harming the environment, but are also harming the very people we care for. CNSA should support the elimination of toxic substances in medical supplies, as well as support increased regulation on the use of incineration as a form of waste management.

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1 WHEREAS, The American Nurses Association, American Hospital Association,
2 Environmental Protection Agency and the organization Health Care
3 Without Harm have come together to form Hospitals for a Healthy
4 Environment (H2E), to educate healthcare workers about pollution
5 Prevention (Sattler 2002); and
6
7 WHEREAS, hospitals generate 600,000 to one million tons of waste in the United
8 States each year (Valenti, 2000); and
9
10 WHEREAS, medical waste incinerators (MWI) are the 4th largest industrial
11 contributors to atmospheric mercury, a toxin known to affect the human
12 nervous systems and immune systems as well as create a risk for
13 hypertension and renal damage (USEPA 2002, Sattler 2002); and
14
15 WHEREAS, Di(2-ethyl-hexyl)phthalate (DEHP), a known carcinogen, is added to
16 medical supplies such as tubing and intravenous (IV) bags made of
17 polyvinyl chloride (PVC) (Alonge 2003); and
18
19 WHEREAS, DEHP does not bind to PVC and can therefore migrate into a patient's
20 blood, plasma, total parental and enteral nutrition (Sattler 2002); and
21
22 WHEREAS, Dioxins are a group of toxic chemicals produced from incineration of
23 PVC/DEHP products and considering incineration is the third leading
24 cause of dioxin production (Sattler 2005); therefore, be it
25
26 RESOLVED, that California Nursing Students' Association (CNSA) should support

22 H2E in the education of healthcare workers regarding pollution
23 prevention; and be it further
24 RESOLVED, that CNSA support the reinforcement of MWI regulations as well as
25 the elimination of medical products containing PVC/DEHP and mercury;
26 and be it further
27 RESOLVED, that CNSA publish an informative article to be posted on the CNSA
28 website or in *Range of Motion*, as well as providing focus sessions at
29 future CNSA events, if feasible; and be it further
30 RESOLVED, that CNSA send copies of this resolution to the American Association of
31 Colleges of Nursing, American Hospital Association, American Nurses
32 Association, Association of Operating Room Nurses, American Public
33 Health Association, Association of California Nurse Leaders,
34 Environmental Protection Agency, Healthcare Without Harm, Hospitals
35 for a Healthy Environment, National League of Nurses, and any others
36 deemed appropriate by the CNSA Board of Directors.