



SUMMER 2014

# GEMS Newsletter



## *A Message From the GEMS Coordinator*

### **YOUR GEMS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

#### **GEMS COORDINATOR**

- Wendy Trapp

#### **EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

- Floss Mambourg, Chair
- Ronnie Smith, Executive Assistant

#### **AFGE**

- Jannes Austin , 2157 Portland
- 2583 Vancouver

#### **Dental**

- Karie Galvin

#### **Energy Manager**

- Ron Higgins

#### **Environmental Management**

- Carter Carlson

#### **Facilities Management**

- John Dodier
- Travis Peake
- Christian Weidler

#### **Industrial Hygiene**

- Jenika Schindlbeck

#### **Infectious Disease (Ad Hoc)**

- Sherri Atherton

#### **Inpatient Services**

- Diane Stief
- Sukey Lupton
- Shane Edwards
- Anne Curley

#### **Logistics and Material Management**

- Gretchen Baker

#### **Operative Care**

- Kathleen Coleman
- Angela Loo

#### **Pathology & Laboratory Medicine**

- Kate Eyberg

#### **Pharmacy**

- Lewis DeJaegher

#### **Projects and Interior Design**

- Melisse Kuhn

#### **Research**

- Heather Parman
- Jessica Robb

#### **Specialty Clinics**

- La Shelle Jackson

Summer is going so fast. It seems like we were just working on environmental aspects and impacts for the medical center and participating in earth day events. Now it is almost time to do our annual management review for GEMS and start calculating our waste data!

This summer, the GEMS Committee has been working on several initiatives. A couple of them are related to green purchasing, replacing 30% recycled paper with 100% recycled paper. The other is to replace our current nitrile gloves! The new gloves are also nitrile, protect against chemotherapy and hazardous drugs, are cheaper, and have aloe in them for better skin protection. They are currently in commodities and should be available for purchase soon! Another item that is frequently

discussed is waste issues. We often find the wrong items in the wrong bins, and we continuously try to educate staff on where things go! Yes, people have placed sharps in the laundry, glass in the Shred it bins and biohazard in the regular trash. Check out page 7 for a quick synopsis of the different waste streams we have and where they should go!

In the meantime GEMS is planning a fall Office Swap and Medication Take Back Day. Check out Page 2 and 3 for more information.

Hope you all got a chance to get outside and enjoy the sunshine! Whether it be hiking, gardening, boating, camping, or fishing! I am sure you all found something to do in the beautiful Pacific Northwest.  
*Wendy Trapp, GEMS Coordinator*

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## Earth Week- How did it go?



Earth Week was once again very successful at both Vancouver and Portland campuses! The first day was sparked by medication take back day as well as a GEMS Awareness campaign with give-aways and educational material for our Veterans and Staff. We collected 2 large boxes of medications. Each box weighed approximately 40-50lbs! This was a real service to our Veterans and helps the environment too with proper disposal. The second day was for the Sustainability Fair, which housed about 30 vendors and over 200 attendees. This event provides education on everything from composting, water reduction, energy credit information, local non-profit conservation, and proper waste disposal of many items. It is a great way to connect with other staff and find out what's going on in the community. The last event was an Office Supply Swap at both campuses. This allows for staff to bring unwanted supplies and others can come and grab what they need. It is really like a large yard sale, but is great for re-use of supplies. We had over 6 tables of supplies, and recycled several hundred pounds of supplies through this program. Another event, is planned for this fall on Sept 16 from 11-1230 on the VA Skybridge and Sept. 17 outside of the Columbia room in Vancouver from 11-1230 also. Hope everyone enjoyed these events as much as I did. I look forward to these every year!

*Wendy Trapp, GEMS Coordinator*

## *Medication Take Back Day- Coming Soon!*



### How to prepare your meds for the drop box

- Consolidate all pills by putting them into a sealed sandwich baggy .
- Make sure that liquids are in a tightly sealed, leak proof container.
- NO SHARPS!

#### Items NOT acceptable for deposit

thermometers  
 sharps/syringes  
 IV bags  
 bloody or infectious waste  
 hydrogen peroxide  
 aerosol cans  
 Inhalers  
 EpiPens

#### Acceptable items for deposit

prescription medications & samples  
 over-the-counter medications  
 vitamins  
 pet medications  
 medicated ointments  
 liquid med

\*All donations are anonymous

This years event is on Tuesday, October 21, in the atrium from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is open Veterans, staff, visitors and the community.

## *Name that Waste Stream*

Waste Stream	Color	What?	Where?	How?
Regulated Medical Waste/ Biohazard	RED	Items that are infectious or oozing/dripping with or without compaction	Soiled utility rooms, some exam and operator rooms	Pelletized and land-filled, pathology waste must be incinerated
Sharps	RED	Razor blades, needles, scalpels, slides, contaminated glass	Wall mounted, or in large rigid, red containers on the floor in a variety of locations	Incinerated
Chemotherapy/ Hazardous Drugs Waste	YELLOW	PPE contaminated with hazardous drugs, empty vials, empty syringes. Contaminated Linens must go into a water soluble bag.	Soiled utility rooms	Linens are laundered using a water soluble bag. Other yellow bins must be incinerated and goes out with our regulated medical waste vendor.
Pharmaceutical Waste	BLUE/WHITE	Non-hazardous medications, which consist of most of our meds	Soiled utility rooms	Incinerated and goes out with our regulated medical waste vendor.
Pharmaceutical Waste	BLACK	Hazardous medication waste Examples include chemo drugs, insulin, inhalers and silver	Soiled utility rooms	Must be incinerated using a hazardous waste incinerator

## RECYCLING

<b>Glass</b>	Clean Glass, Broken OK.	Separate labeled bin
<b>Batteries</b>	Ni-cad, lithium-ion, rechargeable, alkaline	The Big Green Box-Call housekeeping for pick up
<b>Mixed Recycling</b>	All cardboard, non confidential paper, clean plastic bottles, cans	Separate labeled bins
<b>Medical Plastics</b>	Light cardboard, packaging, plastic bags, and non contaminated plastics	Separate labeled bins
<b>Metals</b>	Any metal	Scrap metal-out back of bldg. 100 near ambulance bays
<b>Bulbs</b>	Fluorescent tubes, ballasts, light bulbs	Call work order office x56332
<b>Electronics and electronic equipment</b>	Cords, keyboards, computers, monitors, microwaves	Call or email Dan Simkins
<b>Styrofoam</b>	Package Styrofoam, no peanuts	Orange container out back of bldg. 100 marked Styrofoam only

Want some more green?  
 Visit the [GEMS SharePoint!](#)

Have GEMS questions, contact  
 Wendy Trapp  
 Extension 55417

## Portland VA Medical Center receives top Environmental Award!



In May, our facility was notified by Practice Greenhealth, a national sustainability organization for hospitals, that we had won the prestigious Emerald Award! This is a sustainability award specific for hospitals that have well established environmental programs. The categories for evaluation included, Greening the Operating Room, Energy Reduction, Green Design, Water Savings, Transportation and Green House Gas Emissions, Food, Leadership, Green Chemicals, Green Purchasing, and Waste and Recycling. Our campus is strong in many of these programs, but our community events, waste diversion rate of 42.5%, our OR greening, and our green design program really helped us rank high on the list. Thanks to all who contributed to the award application, as well as the every day efforts to make our campus greener! Only one other VA received this award in the nation, which was Madison, WI, Walter Middleton campus. Only 4 VA's won awards overall, and one facility in Pennsylvania received the top 25 environmental facilities in the nation. As part of a national Committee, the Green Management Advisory Committee (GMAC), it is my responsibility to improve waste reduction and cost saving measures on a national level. This award shows how Portland is a leader in these efforts and I will continue to encourage other VA's to get involved with Practice Greenhealth, and the conference that is associated with this award, Clean Med, which occurs every spring. This next year, the conference is in Portland OR, in May. Hope you can join us!

### *Here Comes the Sun*

Repetition is the key to understanding - which is why we are reminding you to protect yourself from excessive exposure to the ultraviolet rays (UV) of the sun. Exposure to UV radiation has increased over the years due to the depletion of the ozone layer, a naturally occurring gas that filters the sun's UV radiation. For some people, overexposure to UV rays can lead to skin cancer, cataracts and weakened immune systems. To protect against sun-related damage, follow these rules:

- ♦ **Wear those shades.** Sunglasses that provide 99-100% of UVA and UVB protection greatly reduce sun exposure that can lead to cataracts and other eye damage. Be sure to check the label when buying sunglasses to make sure they have proper UV protection.
- ♦ **Lather on the sunscreen.** Use a sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15. Apply it liberally to all exposed areas of your body, particularly your ears, face, back and neck. Reapply every two hours when working, playing, or exercising outdoors; even waterproof sunscreen can come off when you towel off sweat or water.
- ♦ **Listen to the weather reports.** The UV Index, developed by the National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency, provides a forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to the sun and indicates the degree of caution that you should take when working, playing or exercising outdoors. Weather predictions in print and broadcast media announce the UV Index daily.
- ♦ **Stay clear of the midday sun as much as possible.** The sun's UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If you're spending the day at the beach, take refuge under a beach umbrella during those hours when the sun's rays are most intense.
- ♦ **Dress up.** Wear light, long-sleeved shirts and ankle-length pants if you're going to be out in the sun for long periods of time and you'd rather not wear sunscreen. A wide brimmed hat will shade your face, neck, ears and eyes.

*<http://www.earthshare.org/2008/09/here-comes-the.html>*

