

Environmental Risk Assessment of Hospital Wastewater in Federal Medical Centre (Fmc), Umuahia, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study on environmental risk assessment of hospital wastewater at Federal Medical Center (FMC), Umuahia, Nigeria was carried. To this end, the microbial load and heavy metal analyses of the hospital wastewater were determined using established procedures. The wastewater samples were collected directly from the outlet of different wards (Surgical, Children and Emergency wards), with pre-cleaned sterile and dried containers. The result show that they were significant varieties in the bacteria and fungi load of the hospital waste water from the different wards. The bacteria load was on the range of 192×10^7 cfu/ml to 275×10^7 cfu/ml (1.92×10^7 cfu/ml to 2.75×10^7 cfu/ml) while the fungi load ranged from 1.3×10^3 to 4.0×10^3 cfu/ml as shown in the result, the total aerobic viable bacteria count (TVC) was highest 275×10^7 in the wastewater for children ward and lowest, 192×10^7 in the wastewater from the surgery ward. The concentration of lead was in the range 0.02mg/l to 0.09mg/l while cadmium concentrations varies between 0.02 to 0.15mg/l, chromium and copper were in the range of 0.00 to 0.03 and 0.07 to 0.2mg/l respectively, while zinc was found to be between 0.07 to 0.09mg/l and mercury was 0.02mg/l. The result shows that the concentration of the different wards varied significantly ($p < 0.05$). In general, the physicochemical properties of the hospital wastewater samples show that, their disposal into the environment will impact significantly on the environment. It may be rewarding to treat this wastewater prior to discharge into the environment.

Keywords: Micro-organisms, Federal Medical Centre, Hospital waste, Risk Assessment

Introduction

Environmental risk assessment (ERA) is a scientific activity which assesses the potential effect of pollutants on the environmental and as well as on human health. Environmental risk assessment provides a systematic procedure for predicting potential risk to human health or the environment. It further predicts within, there may be risk of adverse effects on the environmental caused by pollutants. Hospitals generate considerable amount of medical waste each year and this attributed to advances in medical services Gaulam et al., and Ekhaise and Omavwoya, observed that hospital waste water has similar quality to municipal waste water in all water treatment plants effluents due to their inefficient removal in conventional systems [1-3]. Again, according to Jolibois and Gnarbet, observed that hospital waste water includes a variety of micro-contaminants that are chemicals, heavy metals, disinfectants and some specific detergents resulting from diagnosis laboratory, research activities and medicine excrement by patients and as such hospitals wastewater may have adverse effect and impact on the environmental and human health [4]. Also, observed that the discharged of hospital effluents into the natural environment represent a significant contribution to the general contamination of the aquatic environment. The research further reported that investigations in developed countries

recorded the increase of viruses and pathogenic bacteria in hospital wastewater; Other research reports also showed the increase of many different pollutants in hospital waste water including molecules from un used and excreted non-metabolisable pharmaceuticals, antibiotic resistant enteric bacteria radioisotopes [5,6]. It was also observed that one of these pollutants, particularly residues of drugs and compound of organo chlorinated, leave treatment plants with little or no degradation however, it was reported that the third world (developing) countries where poverty is high, the circulation of pathogenic germs within the population is made by intermediaries among which water plays a major part. In view of this, it appears that dangers or risk generated by hospital waste water to human health in those countries are much of microbial nature than chemical. In consideration of the above, this project was designed to study the quality characteristics (biological and physico-chemical) of hospital wastewater from Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, Abia State, as the biggest and most visited specialized hospital complex in Abia State. As one way of identifying some environmental stressors released by the hospital. The aim of the study is to carry out the assessment of hospital wastewater in FMC, Abia State.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in the Federal Medical Center (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State Capital. Umuahia has population of 359,230 according to the 2006 Nigeria census. The hospital has ten wards,

two medical wards, on each for male and female, the paediatrics wards, two theatres, one obstetric and other for general surgery. Other areas of the hospital include antenatal clinics, x-ray departments, pharmacy and medical laboratory units, Medical records and statistics among others.

The wastewater samples were collected directly into clean sterilized sample bottles. The collected samples were put in a modified atmospheric package (MAP) and taken to the laboratory without delay. Samples covered wastewater from different hospital wards (Surgical, Children and Emergency wards). This was done for three different Mondays 4/07/2017, 11/07/2017, and 18/07/2017 at about 9am and were designated with (a, b, c) respectively. The wastewater samples were subjected to laboratory analysis to determine their physico-chemical and biological properties. The following methods were used.

Five different culture media were used for this work and they were prepared according to the isolation. A common selective and differential growth medium. The MSA powder was weighed and prepared at a concentration of 111g to 1000ml according to manufacturer's guide. It was autoclaved for 15minutes at 121°C and cooled to about 45°C before 20ml was dispersed into each petri dish. It contains the high concentration of salt that makes it selective for gram positive bacterium staphylococci (and Micrococci) because it contains a level of NaCl.

A selective and differential culture medium designed to selectively isolate gram negative and enteric bacilli bacteria and differentiate them based on lactose fermentation. By utilizing the lactose available in the medium lactose positive bacteria will produce acid that will lower the pH of the agar below 6.8 which results in the appearance of pink colonies.

The agar powder was weighed and prepared at a concentration of 48.5g to 1000ml according to the manufacturers guide. It was autoclaved for 15 minutes at 121°C and allowed to cool to 45°C and 20mls was dispersed into each petri dish.

A selective and different medium used to isolate salmonella and shigella from faeces, urine, fresh and canned foods. It inhibits the growth of gram positive organisms. The medium was weighed and prepared at a concentration of 63g to 1000ml according to the manufacturers guide, it was boiled and allowed to cool to 45°C before dispersed into petri dishes. It was observed for growth after 24hours. This culture medium is used for the isolation and differentiation of gram negative bacilli the medium is primarily used for detection and confirmation of coliforms. 37.5g of the medium was weighed and dissolved in one litre of distilled water. It was autoclaved for 15minutes at 121°C and allowed to cool before dispersing into petri dishes each. It was observed for growth after 24 hours.

A general purpose medium used for the cultivation of a wide variety of microbes. It is frequently used for the cultivation and purification of cultures. It provides amino acids, minerals and other nutrients used by a wide variety of bacteria for growth. It contains agar as a solidifying agent, 28g of the medium was weighed and dissolved in 1000ml of water. It was autoclaved at 121°C for 15minutes and allowed to cool to 45°C. it was then dispensed into petri dishes 20mls each inverted and allowed to stand for 24 hours.

Heavy metals in hospitals wastewater were determined by atomic absorption spectrophotometer (AAS) following a double acid wet digestion method as described by (APHA, 1995). A measured volume (10ml) was treated with the combination of concentrated nitric acid (HNO₃) and concentrated per chloric acid (HClO₄) at high temperature. The resulting digest was diluted to a specific volume and filtered through Whitman no 42 filter paper to obtain the extract that was used for AAS assay. Ace the test, heavy metals run in turns in the instrument using the appropriate hollow cathode lamp at their respective wavelengths.

The direct culture method APHA accordingly, a unit volume 10ml of a well-mixed sample were diluted in a 10fold in series as shown below.

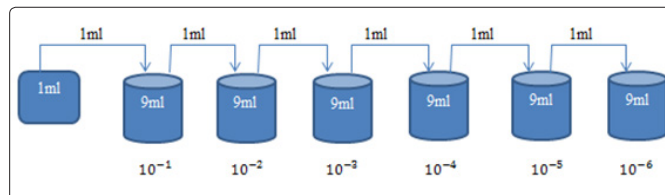


Figure 1: 10-fold serial dilution

Inocula of 1.0ml were collected aseptically from the 4th and 6th diluent and cultured by pour plate technique and incubated at 37°C for 24 to 48 hours [7]. The number of colonies in the culture plate were counted with the aid of an electronic colony counter. The formula below was used to calculate the total viable count (TVC) expressed in colony forming units (CFU) per ml.

This was determined using the multiple tube fermentation technique and were expressed as the most probable number (MPN) of coliforms per 100ml of samples [7].

Each sample were cultured in 15 test tubes comprising of 10 tubes of single strength broth and 5 tubes of double strength broth. The first tubes of single strength broth were inoculated with 0.1ml sample while the second 5tubes was inoculated with 1.0ml each and each of the double strength broth test tubes was inoculated with 10 ml of samples. After inoculation, the number of tubes showing positive results in each of the groups were counted and use was made of the standard MPN probability test to estimate the number of coliforms in the test sample.

This entails the determination of different types of bacteria species present in the sample. This was done by isolation characterization and identification of the bacteria in the waste water samples.

This involved subculture technique. In this regard the culture plate (as in the determination of total viable count) were examined for the presence of distinct colonies. From such distinct colonies, inocula was collected and aseptically transferred to a fresh solid sterile agar plate and incubated at 37°C for 24 to 48 hours. The sub culture was examined for uniformity as mark of purity. The pure cultures were used for characterization and subsequent identification.

Isolated and characterized bacteria were identified based on their matching characteristics with existing taxa in standard manuals. On this regard, the recorded characteristics of the isolates was compared with what is available in standard manuals. The Bergys manual of determinative bacteriology for the identification of medical bacteria

were used for comparison which share the same characteristics when matched with the ones in the manuals was identified accordingly. Obtained data on the occurrence of bacteria isolates of the wastewater samples from the different hospital wards of FMC and the levels of the different heavy metals in the samples and their physicochemical characteristics was subjected to statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the level of differences between them. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version was used for the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Microbial Load of Hospital Wastewater

Sample	Bacteria load×10 ⁷	Fungi Load×10 ³
Surgical	214.33 ± 12.74	3.33 ± 1.16
Children	275.00 ± 8.72	1.33 ± 0.58
Emergency	192.33 ± 10.01	4.00 ± 1.41

The values show the mean of triplicate analysis of ± standard deviation; figure with different superscript down the column are significantly different (P<0.05)

This table shows the microbial loads of the test hospital wastewater collected from three different wards in Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia. The result show that they were significant varieties

in the bacteria and fungi load of the hospital waste water from the different wards. The bacteria load was on the range of 192×10⁷ cfm/ml to 275×10⁷ cfm/ml (1.92×10⁷ cfm/ml to 2.75×10⁷ cfm/ml) while the fungi load ranged from 1.3×10³ to 4.0×10³ cfm/ml as shown in the result, the total aerobic viable bacteria count (TVC) was highest 275×10⁷ in the wastewater for children ward and lowest, 192×10⁷ in the wastewater from the surgery ward. The variation between the bacteria and fungi loads of the wastewater from the different wards, were of significant different (P<0.05). Generally, the results appear to be in line with findings of previous researchers to the subject matter. reported bacteria counts of 228×10⁹, 137×10⁶ and 144×10⁹ cfm/ml in hospital waste from the surgical ward, baby's ward and medical ward respectively in a hospital in Enugu, South East Nigeria. Also the author recorded higher bacteria load than fungi as is the case with project report findings. The high bacteria load of the hospital waste reflects the potentials of the wastewater pollutant when discharged into the environment [8]. On the other hand, there are possibilities of the microbes assisting in degradation of solids thereby giving lower sludge production [9]. Notwithstanding, it is not just the microbial loads as needed that matters in the assessments of hospital wastewater but the types of microbes. Some microbes may be pathogenic while others may help by playing beneficial roles (when discharged into the environment) such as nutrient recycling [10].

Table 2: Occurrence of Microbial Isolates in Hospital Wastewater

Samples	Staphylococcus spp	E.coli spp	Salmonella spp	Proteus spp	Bacillus spp	Pseudomonas spp	Streptococcus spp	Klebsiella spp	Candida spp	Aspergillus spp
Surgical A	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
B	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
C	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	33.3% (1/3)	0% (0/3)	33.3% (1/3)	100% (3/3)	0% (0/3)	0% (0/3)	0% (0/3)	0% (0/3)
Children A	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
B	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-
C	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	67.7% (1/3)	67.7% (0/3)	33.3% (1/3)	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	33.3% (1/3)	0% (0/3)	0% (0/3)
Emergency a	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
b	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-
c	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+
	100% (3/3)	100% (3/3)	33.3% (1/3)	33.3% (1/3)	67.7% (2/3)	67.7% (2/3)	67.7% (2/3)	33.3% (1/3)	67.7% (2/3)	33.3% (1/3)
Total no	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
No of +ve	9	9	4	1	4	8	5	2	2	1
% of occurrence	100% (9/9)	100% (9/9)	44.4% (4/9)	11.1% (1/9)	44.4% (4/9)	88.9% (8/9)	55.6% (5/9)	22.2% (2/9)	22.2% (2/9)	11.1% (1/9)

Keywords: a = First sample from each ward; b= Second sample from each ward; c=Third sample from each ward.

The values show the mean of triplicate analysis of ± standard deviation; figure with different superscript down the column are significantly different (P<0.05).

This table shows the types of micro-organisms isolated from the different hospital wastewater samples. The result shows the presence of up to eight bacteria species and two species of fungi in all. However, there were significant variation in their relative occurrences in the wastewater from the different hospital wards. The isolated micro-organisms included some established pathogens as well as some non-pathogens. The bacteria isolates included some species of staphylococcus, streptococcus, and bacillus, as gram positive bacteria as well

as salmonella, klebsiella, Escherichia, proteus and pseudomonas as gram negative bacteria. These organisms contain some species which pose harm to public health and as such are pathogenic [11]. The frequency of occurrence of the bacteria isolates shows that there was variation in the prevalence of the different organism in the sample from different hospital wards. E. coli and staphylococcus aureus were present in all the samples and both had 100% occurrence in the test samples. Bacillus subtilis had the least occurrence of 11.1% being present in one out of the 3 samples (emergency ward wastewater). Also, it was observed that the occurrence of the isolates was highest in the emergency ward wastewater sample and least in the surgical and wastewater. The presence of the variety of bacteria isolates means there is a potential risk to the recipient environmental

water or the soil. Again, it is observed that the isolates found in the hospital wastewater matched with the findings of previous research work [12].

It was also observed that the occurrence of fungi was very low and selective. Candida albicans and aspergillus species occurred only in the emergency wards. The low occurrence of the fungi is indicative of the fact that the effluent wastewater will not be conducive to the growth of the fungi. In general, there were many types of micro-organisms in the hospital wastewater and this was attributed to the diverse forms of disease brought in by patients and accordingly captured in the wastewater.

Table 3: Heavy Metals in Hospital Wastewater

SAMPLE	Lead (Pb)	Cadmium (Cd)	Chromium (Cr)	Copper (Cu)	Zinc (Zn)	Mercury (Hg)
FEPA LIMITS	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0.05
Surgical	b	c	C	A	A	B
	0.09 ± 0.01	0.15 ± 0.00	0.03 ± 0.00	0.20 ± 0.12	0.08 ± 0.00	0.02 ± 0.00
Children	a	B	A	A	A	A
	0.02 ± 0.00	0.03 ± 0.00	0.00 ± 0.00	0.09 ± 0.04	0.09 ± 0.04	0.00 ± 0.00
Emergency	a	A	B	A	A	b
	0.05 ± 0.00	0.02 ± 0.00	0.01 ± 0.00	0.07 ± 0.00	0.07 ± 0.00	0.02 ± 0.00

Keywords: a = First sample from each ward; b= Second sample from each ward; c= Third sample from each ward.

The values show the mean of triplicate analysis of ± standard deviation; figure with different superscript down the column are significantly different (P<0.05).

The table shows the heavy metal content of the hospital waste water samples. Obtained results show that there were many heavy metals in the wastewater including lead, cadmium, chromium, copper, zinc and mercury but at varying concentrations. The concentration of lead was in the range 0.02mg/l to 0.09mg/l while cadmium concentrations varies between 0.02 to 0.15mg/l, chromium and copper were in the range of 0.00 to 0.03 and 0.07 to 0.2mg/l respectively, while zinc was found to be between 0.07 to 0.09mg/l and mercury was 0.02mg/l. The result shows that the concentration of the different wards varied with significant from difference (p<0.05). Lead was higher in surgical ward wastewater (0.09mg/l) and least (0.02mg/l) and least in children ward wastewater. Also, cadmium, chromium and copper were higher in the surgical ward. The level of heavy metals in the wastewater implies that the discharge of the wastewater into the environment possess danger as the metals are not biodegradable but ratio can accumulate in the food chain such as vegetable and groundwater [13]. Nelson and Campbell observed that pilling up other metal in the environment may lead to their accumulation to toxic levels [14]. In all, however, these metals were found to be in the wastewater at levels which fall within the permissible level by World Health Organisation (WHO) and Federal Environmental and Protection Agencies (FEPA).

Table 4: Physicochemical Parameters of Hospital Wastewater

SAMPLE	TS	COD	TDS	pH	Temp	DO	BOD
FEPA LIMITS	2500mg/l	15-50	50mg/l	6-9	20°C	10-50	50mg/l
Surgical	a	a	b	c	a	b	B
	666.67 ± 125.83	426.67 ± 92.37	266.67 ± 28.87	10.00 ± 0.00	32.00 ± 0.00	21.67 ± 0.12	16.97 ± 0.15
Children	b	a	c	a	b	C	c
	258.33 ± 175.59	480.00 ± 160.00	700.00 ± 86.60	9.57 ± 0.06	37.33 ± 0.57	58.80 ± 1.58	40.60 ± 1.65
Emergency	A	A	A	b	b	a	A
	533.33 ± 28.87	426.67 ± 92.37	133.33 ± 28.87	9.87 ± 0.06	36.67 ± 0.57	19.13 ± 0.15	14.40 ± 0.36

Keywords: a = First sample from each ward; b= Second sample from each ward; c= Third sample from each ward. TS= Total Solids; COD= Chemical Oxygen Demand; TDS= Total Dissolved Oxygen; FEPA= Federal Environmental Protection Agency; DO = Dissolved Oxygen; BOD= Biological Oxygen Demand

The values show the mean of triplicate analysis of \pm standard deviation; figure with different superscript down the column are significantly different ($P < 0.05$).

This table shows the physicochemical characteristics of the test hospital wastewater. The result show that the hospital wastewater had pH in the alkaline range having values between 9.47 and 10.0, while the temperature at the time of sampling was between 32.00°C (surgical ward wastewater) and 37.33°C \pm 0.57. The above result showed that the wastewaters failed tolerable pH level (WHO and FEPA). pH of water is a critical factor that affects its other qualities including the level of dissolved oxygen (DO) as well as the type of micro-organisms that thrive well in the water.

The total solids (TS) in the wastewater was in the range of 258.3mg/l to 666.7mg/l and was the highest in the surgical ward sample and least in the children ward samples and was within permissible limit of FEPA (2500mg/l).

The DO and BOD were high having ranges of 19.13 to 58.80 and 14.40 to 40.60mg/l respectively. Both the DO and BOD were highest in the children ward. These two parameters are widely used to characterize the organic content of wastewater as it measures the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. From the result, it was observed that only the children ward failed the acceptable criteria for wastewater, 10-50mg/l according to the FEPA standards.

The chemical oxygen demand, (COD) was in the range of 426.67 to 480.00 and was also highest in the children ward wastewater sample. From the obtained figures, the COD/BOD ratio will be in range of 29.6 to 12.0 which is considerably high.

Again, the BOD is low, 14.40 – 40.60 mg/l and was within the permissible limit of 50mg/l.

In general, the physicochemical properties of the hospital wastewater samples show that, their disposal into the environment will impact significantly on the environment. It may be rewarding to treat this wastewater prior to discharge into the environment.

It was observed that hospital wastewater has significant influence on the environment. The microbial load as well as the high concentrations of the physicochemical parameters suggests that the activities of hospital wastewater in the environment is a major health and environmental threat, which therefore, calls for a proper regulatory system on disposal of the hospital wastewater into the environment and also, it would be rewarding if the hospital wastewater is treated prior discharge into the environment [15-53].

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