



POSITION STATEMENT

Ensuring the Health and Safety of Workers When Handling Hazardous Drugs

INTRODUCTION

Hazardous drugs are chemicals that demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics: carcinogenicity, genotoxicity, teratogenicity, reproductive toxicity, or organ toxicity (Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), 2019). New drugs with structural or toxicity profile that mimics an agent known to be hazardous by one of the ONS criteria should be treated as such (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], 2016). Handling of any hazardous drugs (HDs) can result in exposure for healthcare workers, as documented in a multitude of case studies throughout the medical literature. Exposure to HDs has been associated with acute symptoms such as nasal sores, hair loss, skin rash, adverse reproductive outcomes such as infertility and miscarriage, genetic changes (e.g., chromosomal aberrations, sister-chromatid exchanges), and an increased occurrence of cancer (Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 2019).

RATIONALE

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) acknowledged the occupational risks of HDs and issued recommendations for safe handling more than 30 years ago. Since then, NIOSH and have published

