III. Quantifying mercury use – the whys and hows of doing a mercury inventory

Key points

- Conduct a baseline count (inventory) of mercury-containing products and materials in the facility
- Compile the findings into a database

Toolkit resource for this Activity

- Mercury inventory worksheet (Appendix III-1)
- Sample completed mercury inventory worksheet (Appendix III-2)
- Record sheet for inventory process (Appendix III-3)

The mercury inventory provides a detailed description of mercury in the hospital, including the type of mercury-containing product or material, where they are located and the number or amount of each type of product or material. This information is important for several reasons:

- It facilitates estimating the total amount of mercury in the hospital,
- It allows the team to gain consensus on the magnitude and extent of the hospital's mercury use and to develop a prioritized strategy for eliminating the mercury,
- It helps explain the scope of the team's work to someone outside the team, and
- It demonstrates the benefits of undertaking the mercury reduction work.

How to conduct the inventory

1. Distribute the worksheets to the designated contact in each department. To keep track of inventory activities, the Mercury Team may wish to keep a master list of the departments and contact person for each department.
   Appendix III-1 Inventory worksheet
   Appendix III-3 Record Sheet for Inventory Process

2. In each department, the designated staff member goes through department with the Mercury Inventory worksheet and locates all the mercury-containing products. For each product, he/she records a brief description of product and the quantity of that product in the department. If the product is a liquid or material measured by volume or weight, the appropriate measure should be recorded. For example: *10 unopened jars (125 g each) of mercuric oxide. 1 partially used jar approximately ½ full (~63 g).*

   The staff member chosen to perform the inventory in his/her department should be familiar with the devices or materials used in that department and knowledgeable about how to identify mercury. (In clinical areas, most of the mercury will be in the form of a silvery liquid contained in a glass column or ampoule.)

3. The completed form is returned to the Mercury Leadership Team.

4. The Mercury Team (or designee) will compile the inventory information into a database.

5. The database will be used to estimate total amount of mercury, amount by department, et cetera that will be used to prioritize and develop action plans, as well as to measure progress over time.