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Waste Management in Mexico during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Waste management is a priority for any government in the world. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in waste generation caused by changes in consumption patterns, such as PPE (personal protective equipment including face masks, face shields, safety glasses, gloves, among others). In Mexico, a country with a population of roughly 126 million (INEGI, 2020), the total generation of medical and municipal solid waste (MSW) from December 2019 to June 2020 was between 81,214 and 92,338 tons per day, 3.3-16.5% more than the waste generated in normal conditions (INECCSEMARNAT,2020); likely due to the daily disposal of 81.3 million PPE face masks (Benson et al., 2021). The total number of positive cases of the SARS-CoV-2 virus stands at approximately 5.3 million (CONACYT, 2022), just over 4% of the national population. As a result, the Mexican government has designed various integrated waste management strategies to combatted sanitary emergency. One such measure is a guideline known as "Best Practices for COVID-19 Prevention in Municipal Solid Waste Management", including short and long-term measures for every stage of waste management and preventive measures for COVID-19 waste generation sites, their collection, and final disposal. This document compiles successful waste management practices from Italy, France, Spain, and the United States, information about adequate separation at the source, the government agencies required to address the emergency, and MSW management inside and outside the home (SEMARNAT-SSA-CONACYT, 2020). Despite being a developing country with relatively limited resources, managing the pandemic in Mexico has been possible and reducing the amount of waste reaching final disposal sites, thus avoiding the saturation of landfills.

Biography

Dr. Lorena De Medina Salas completed her PhD at age 29 at Pacific Western University,USA. She is a professor and researcher in the waste management area of the Environmental Engineering Program at Facultad de Ciencias Químicas, Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico, with 15 years of experience. She has published more than 30papers and has been serving as a scientific reviewer for reputed journals.

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