

## **Sharps Injury Control Program (SHARPS)**

Completed Occupational Health Branch Activity, 1996-2005)

### **Background and Purpose**

There are more than 700,000 health care workers in California. Many health care workers use needles and other sharp devices that may result in injury. In 2001, more than 12,000 needlesticks were reported in California health care workers.

Every needlestick carries with it a possible risk of infection with hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Using safer equipment, called safety engineered medical devices, and receiving specialized safety training can prevent these injuries and the diseases that may result from them. To do this, the Sharps Injury Control Program (SHARPS) was established in 1996 by California Senate Bill 1208. In addition, the program completed a 3-year grant (2004-2006) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to collect detailed data on sharps injuries in California hospitals.

The purpose of the SHARPS program was to collect and provide information that helps health care workers and employers reduce the risk of sharps injuries.

### **Activities**

To accomplish this, we:

- Collected data on needlesticks in California acute care hospitals to find out who is getting injured and how the injuries occur;
- Analyzed trends in sharps injuries over time to evaluate the effectiveness of the Cal/OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard in reducing sharps injuries in health care workers;
- Provided information on available safety engineered medical devices through a web-based device list;
- Evaluated user satisfaction with selected safety engineered medical devices through focus groups with clinicians (2003-2004).

In 2005, the program was closed due to a reduction in funds from the State of California. The list of safety engineered medical devices that was evaluated and maintained by the SHARPS program is no longer available. For those interested in this information, a list of devices designed to prevent needlestick and sharps injuries and exposure to bloodborne pathogens is posted by the University of Virginia International Health Care Worker Safety Center at [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm).

### **Partners**

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Public Health Institute
- Center for Occupational and Environmental Health
- University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing

## Frequently asked questions

1. What is a "safety engineered medical device"?
2. Where can I find available safety engineered medical devices that my hospital can substitute for conventional devices?
3. What should a Sharps Injury Prevention Program include?
4. What should an employee do if he or she experiences a needlestick?
5. What should an employer do if an employee has a needlestick injury?
6. Where can health care providers get help with the medical management of a worker who has been exposed to bloodborne pathogens?

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### **1. What is a "safety engineered medical device"?**

A safety engineered medical device has a built-in feature that effectively reduces the device user's risk of a sharps injury. Examples of engineered safety features include needle retraction, needle sheathing, and needleless devices.

### **2. Where can I find available safety engineered medical devices that my hospital can substitute for conventional devices?**

The Sharps program no longer maintains a list of these devices. For those interested in this information, a list of devices designed to prevent needlestick and sharps injuries and exposure to bloodborne pathogens is posted by the University of Virginia International Health Care Worker Safety Center at [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm).

### **3. What should a Sharps Injury Prevention Program include?**

A useful resource is the CDC's *Workbook for Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating a Sharps Injury Prevention Program* [[www.cdc.gov/sharpssafety/](http://www.cdc.gov/sharpssafety/)].

### **4. What should an employee do if he or she experiences a needlestick?**

If you experienced a needlestick or sharps injury or were exposed to the blood or other body fluid of a patient during the course of your work, immediately follow these steps [[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/emergnedl.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/emergnedl.html)]:

- Wash needlesticks and cuts with soap and water.
- Flush splashes to the nose, mouth, or skin with water.
- Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline, or sterile irrigants.
- Report the incident to your supervisor.
- Immediately seek medical treatment.

### **5. What should an employer do if an employee has a needlestick injury?**

If an employee has a needlestick injury, Employee Health Services should, at a minimum, do the following:

- Immediate post-exposure medical evaluation and follow-up for the injured employee;
- Document the exposure incident, according to Bloodborne Pathogens Standard requirements;
- Evaluate the exposure incident to identify short-term actions that may be needed to prevent future incidents.

## **6. Where can health care providers get help with the medical management of a worker who has been exposed to bloodborne pathogens?**

Call the Needlestick Pepline, at (888) 448-4911. This helpline provides assistance for health care providers who are managing work-related exposures to bloodborne pathogens. The Pepline calls are answered by UCSF (University of California, San Francisco) faculty physicians, clinical pharmacists, and nurse practitioners who provide around-the-clock advice on providing treatment for workers who have been exposed to HIV and hepatitis B or C on the job. Exposure to HIV, hepatitis, or other bloodborne pathogens requires a prompt, individualized response.

### **Related Resources** (current at the time project was completed)

- NIOSH topics page - Bloodborne Infectious Diseases  
[[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/bbp/) ]
- OSHA Safety and Health Topics - Bloodborne Pathogens and Needlestick Prevention [ [www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodbornepathogens/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/bloodbornepathogens/index.html) ]
- CDC – Protecting Healthcare Workers from Bloodborne Pathogens  
[ [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/wrkrProtect\\_bp.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/wrkrProtect_bp.html) ]
- Safety-Engineered Sharp Device List - International Healthcare Worker Safety Center, University of Virginia  
[ [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/safetydevice.cfm) ]
- University of Virginia International Health Care Worker Safety Center  
[ [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/home.cfm](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/epinet/home.cfm) ]

### **Related OHB publications**

- Sharps Injury Control Program Report - Results of a survey of health care facilities in California regarding needlestick injuries and needlestick injury programs (2002)
- Needlestick Injury Surveillance In California, 1998-99 – journal article, California Morbidity Report (2000)
- Sharps-Related Injuries in California Healthcare Facilities: Pilot Study Results From the Sharps Injury Surveillance Registry - journal article, Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology (2003)

These publications and more information about the work of Occupational Health Branch (OHB) are available on our website: [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb)