Needlestick injury a clinical, lab risk

During the past week, two separate UK military healthcare workers treating Ebola patients in Sierra Leone returned to England after risking exposure from needlestick injuries. (Source: The Guardian) The incidents underscore the risks of needlestick and sharps injuries for even the most highly trained health professionals.

Needlestick accidents, also known as percutaneous injuries, expose lab and clinical workers to dangerous bloodborne pathogens. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that approximately 1,000 such injuries occur U.S. hospitals every day, exposing workers to hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and over 20 other illnesses. (Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health) The most frequent causes of needlestick injuries are manipulating a needle in a patient and improper disposal. A 2013 study estimates that percutaneous injuries cost the healthcare system over $1 billion every year. (Source: Safe in Common)

Healthcare facilities and laboratories can help prevent needlestick injuries by investing in safe equipment and providing staff with the necessary education and training. Additionally, employees should be familiar with needlestick injury protocols should such an accident occur. (Source: American Nurses Association, Vanderbilt University)

ACTION STEPS
Ensure your facility’s equipment and disposal systems are in line with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Bloodborne Pathogen Standard.

Train staff on the appropriate work practice procedures to reduce the risk of needlestick injuries, including maintaining visual contact with sharps and handing off needles through a centralized buffer. (Source: American Nurses Association)

Be aware of the appropriate actions following a needlestick injury, including identifying the source patient and notifying employee health services or the emergency department. (Source: American Nurses Association)

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY

05 Amer. Physical Therapy Assn. Combined Sections Mtg Indiana Convention Center & Lucas Oil Stadium

The 39 Steps The Center for the Performing Arts

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