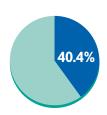


KNOWLEDGE FLASH

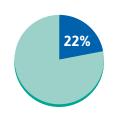


RISK AND PREVENTION OF SHARPS INJURIES IN THE OPERATING ROOM

The operating room (O.R.) is a high-risk environment for occupational injury.¹ Although sharp devices can cause injuries anywhere within the healthcare environment, data shows most injuries occur in the O.R.² Frequent passing, handling, and disposal of sharps bring opportunities for O.R. staff to sustain a sharps injury. Each sharps injury can potentially involve inadvertent exposure to serious bloodborne viral pathogens, such as, but not limited to: Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV).¹



40.4% of all reported occupational sharps injuries occur in the O.R.²



22% were sustained while passing sharp devices between members of the surgical team³

Injuries can cause direct and indirect costs to the individual and the workplace:³

- · Employee loss of time
- · Personnel time lost in investigating the injury
- Laboratory testing expense
- · Post-exposure treatment cost
- · Replacing or reassigning staff cost

Tips for Prevention of Sharps Injuries^{4,5,6}



Double Gloving

- Double gloving is recommended for all procedures
- Double gloving reduces the risk of exposure to patient blood by as much as 87% when the outer glove is punctured



Create a Neutral Zone

Protect yourself, co-workers, and patients:

- Limit certain areas for sharps only
- Define the area, allowing flexibility for emergency situations
- Allow one instrument at a time in the zone
- Openly communicate what, when, and how the neutral zone will work



Use Correct Technique

Improper technique can lead to sharps injuries:

- Use instruments, rather than fingers, to grasp needles, load/ unload suture and scalpels
- If required, one-handed recapping using the scoop method for hypodermic needles



Use Alternative Engineering Control Methods

- Cutting: electrocautery, ultrasonic scalpels
- **Suture:** blunt needles, stapling devices, adhesive strips, glues
- Instruments: blunt vs. sharp, protective caps on sharp instruments when not in use
- Scalpels: with safety shields

References

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