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Prevention and Wellness Across the Life Span

APHA 140TH ANNUAL MEETING & EXPO
OCT 27-31, 2012 SAN FRANCISCO, CA



Infancy



Teen Years



Retirement

268707 Occupational Exposures to Bloodborne Pathogens among Dental Workers

Wednesday, October 31, 2012 : 11:30 AM - 11:50 AM

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As part of healthcare delivery, workers risk exposure to bloodborne pathogens. This is often due to percutaneous injuries with contaminated needles and other sharps devices and is a significant public health concern. During delivery of oral health care services, the dental team is particularly vulnerable to non-intentional injuries. The OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP) Standard, created in 1991 and subsequently updated, protects workers from potential BBP hazards associated with the performance of job duties. Data show that dental workers continue to be occupationally exposed despite CDC recommendations for infection control in dentistry and the availability of new and safer devices and work practices. Data from the Massachusetts Sharps Injury Surveillance System, which collects data on sharps injuries from hospitals and affiliated clinics (including dental clinics), show that between 2002 and 2009, more than 230 injuries related to dental procedures have occurred. Because this surveillance system is hospital based, it does not include private practices and thus significantly underestimates the number of injuries occurring in the dental setting. A recent Massachusetts case underscores the continuation of unsafe practices for many reasons, including lack of knowledge by practitioners or efforts at cost saving. This presentation will review key elements of the BBP Standard, including those frequently cited by OSHA, along with injury prevention methods. Twenty-one years after passage of the BBP Standard, one would expect a decline in injuries and that safer practices, devices and systems are in use. This is not always the case, therefore it is important to revisit this regulation.

Learning Areas:

Occupational health and safety

Public health or related organizational policy, standards, or other guidelines

Learning Objectives:

1. List key elements of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. 2. Describe methods to prevent occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

Presenting author's disclosure statement:

Qualified on the content I am responsible for because: For the previous 11 years I have run the MDPH Sharps Injury Surveillance System, collecting and analyzing sharps injury data and using that information to identify prevention methods.

Any relevant financial relationships? No

I agree to comply with the American Public Health Association Conflict of Interest and Commercial Support Guidelines, and to disclose to the participants any off-label or experimental uses of a commercial product or service discussed in my presentation.

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