Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings: Basic Expectations for Safe Care

MODULE 5 — Sharps Safety
Modules in the Slide Series

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5. **Sharps Safety (this module)**
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Percutaneous Injuries Among Dental Health Care Personnel

- Defined as needlestick or cut with sharp object.
- Most involve burs, needles, and other sharp objects.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA’s) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard helps to protect dental health care personnel (DHCP) from blood exposure and sharps injuries.
- These injuries pose the risk of bloodborne pathogen transmission to DHCP and patients.
Sharps Safety

- Most exposures in dentistry are preventable.
- Each dental practice should have policies and procedures in place that address sharps safety:
  - Take precautions **while using sharps**.
  - Take precautions **during cleanup**.
  - Take precautions **during disposal**.
- **Prevention is primary.**
Engineering Controls

• Whenever possible, engineering controls should be the primary method to reduce exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

• These controls remove or isolate the hazard.

• They are frequently technology-based, for example:
  – Self-sheathing anesthetic needles, safety scalpels, and needleless IV ports.
  – Sharps containers and needle recapping devices.
Engineering Controls

- Use sharps devices that have safety features engineered into them.
- Be sure to know how to use these safety features.
- Related materials are available at Now You See It, Now You Don’t
Work Practice Controls

• Change the way you perform tasks.

• Examples include:
  – Not bending or breaking needles.
  – Not passing a syringe with an unsheathed needle.
  – Removing burs before disassembling the handpiece from the dental unit.
  – Using instruments in place of fingers for tissue retraction or palpation.
Sharps Safety Practices

• Be Prepared
• Be Aware
• Dispose with Care

Source: Sharps Safety for Healthcare Settings Teaching Tools
Be Prepared

Before beginning a procedure:

• Organize equipment.

• Ensure adequate lighting.

• Keep sharps pointed away from user.

• Locate a sharps disposal container.
Be Aware

During a procedure:

• Maintain visual contact with sharps.
• Be aware of nearby personnel.
• Control the location of sharps to avoid injury.
• Do not pass needles unsheathed.
• Consider alerting others when passing sharps and consider a neutral zone for placing and retrieving sharps.
• Activate the safety feature of devices as soon as procedure is completed.

Source: Sharps Safety for Healthcare Settings Teaching Tools
Cleanup—Dispose with Care

- Check procedure trays and waste materials for exposed sharps before handling.
- Look for sharps and equipment left behind inadvertently.
- Transport reusable sharps in a closed, labeled container.
- Secure the container to prevent spilling contents.
Sharps Containers

- Keep hands behind sharps during disposal.
- Never put hands or fingers into sharps containers.
- Visually inspect sharps containers for overfilling.
- Replace containers before they become overfilled.
Evaluating Safety Devices

The Needlestick and Prevention Act mandated changes to the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard in 2001:

- DHCP directly responsible for patient care (e.g., dentists, hygienists, dental assistants) must identify, evaluate and select devices with engineered safety features at least annually and as they become available.
Developing Programs to Prevent Sharps Injuries

• Assign a staff person knowledgeable about or willing to be trained in injury prevention (i.e., a safety coordinator or an infection control coordinator) to:
  – Promote safety awareness.
  – Facilitate prompt reporting and postexposure management of injuries.
  – Identify unsafe work practices and devices.
  – Coordinate the selection and evaluation of safer dental devices.
  – Organize staff education and training.
  – Complete the necessary reporting forms and documentation.
  – Monitor safety performance.
Identifying Safer Dental Devices

- Developing evaluation criteria.
- Screening devices.
- Evaluating devices.
CDC Sample Screening and Device Evaluation Forms for Dentistry

Source: Sample Screening and Device Evaluation Forms for Dentistry
Occupational Exposure Incident

- Percutaneous injury:
  - Needlestick, puncture wound, or cut.
- Splash of blood or body fluid onto:
  - Mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, or mouth.
  - Non-intact skin (e.g., chapped, abraded, dermatitis).
Postexposure Management Program

- Clear policies and procedures.
- Education of DHCP.
- Rapid access to qualified health care professional who can provide:
  - Clinical care.
  - Postexposure prophylaxis (PEP).
  - Testing of source patients and DHCP.
Postexposure Management

- Wound management.
- Exposure reporting.
- Assessment of infection risk:
  - Type and severity of exposure.
  - Bloodborne pathogen status of source person.
  - Susceptibility of exposed person.
Sharps Safety Resources

- CDC. *Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings—2003*
- CDC. Oral Health website. Screening and Evaluating Safer Dental Devices
- CDC. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Bloodborne Infectious Diseases website. HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C: Preventing Needlesticks and Sharps Injuries
- CDC. Sharps Safety for Healthcare Settings website
- CDC. *Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings: Basic Expectations for Safe Care*