

## **Case Study:** Policy planning for occupational health and exposure control

Evaluating policy measures to protect healthcare workers from bloodborne pathogens: Universal Precautions, Post-exposure follow-up, and Exposure control planning.

During the evening tour of duty on the weekend, an ICN Nurse sustained a needlestick injury (nsi), a deep wound, after starting an IV on a patient. The sharps container was on the injection trolley being used for the patient in the next bed and the nurse was stuck while walking to the sharps container. The source patient was in the hospital for pneumonia secondary to AIDS and being treated with antiretrovirals. It is unknown whether the source patient has hepatitis B or C virus infection. The nurse had not been immunized against hepatitis B.

### **The Policy:**

#### **Institutional/Hospital**

The policy for post-exposure prophylaxis states that the employer will provide PEP within 24 hours. In practice at this hospital, when a nsi occurs on a weekend, the nurse is told to return on Monday for evaluation when the occupational health office is open.

There is a health and safety committee but they do not include representatives from patient care areas only 2 union representatives who work in radiology and the lab and the committee does not consider exposure control or review the needlestick injuries that occur.

#### **Provincial**

All workers must be immunized against hepatitis B.  
Sharps containers must be available in all patient care areas.

#### **National**

Universal precautions are required.  
All health care workers must receive immunization against hepatitis B preservice.

There is no occupational health agency in the government or within the ministry of health.

You are the:

1. Nurse with the injury
2. The union steward
3. The President of the National Nurses Association
4. The chief matron of the hospital
5. Director of infection control for the hospital

What questions would you ask the nurses about the nature of the needlestick injury? What would you recommend about PEP for the nurse?

What other policies would you review in this case? How/where would you get the information about the policy?

What goals/recommendations do you have for this hospital? For the health and safety committee?

What recommendations for policy in the hospital, province and national department of health?

What steps would you take to achieve these goals? Timeline?

Who are your allies in this effort?