SHARPS HANDLING AND DISPOSAL
LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this presentation the participant should be able to:

- Prevent sharps/exposure injuries
- Prepare for sharps procedures
- Prepare equipment and apply safe work techniques
- Correctly store and dispose of sharps
- Treat and report needlestick/exposure injuries
- Prepare for home and mobile visits
WHAT ARE NEEDLESTICK AND SHARP INJURIES?

- Needlestick and sharps injuries can be described as any cut, puncture, nick, scratch or gash caused by medical instruments, needles, or any other sharp object.
- Incident’s involving needles are one of the most common types of possible exposures (referred to as a needlestick injury)
- The healthcare industry is associated with an increased risk to workers of acquiring vaccine-preventable diseases
- By adopting precautions we mitigate the risk of occupational exposure to blood, blood products or body substances
- Precautions include the appropriate handling and disposal of needles and sharps and the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, aprons/lab gowns and eye protection.
PREVENTING SHARPS / EXPOSURE INJURIES

The following are examples of situations that have led to occupational exposure:

- Handling broken glass tube
- Handling sharp objects such as blades, scalpels, razors
- Failure to follow correct collection procedures or taking short cuts when performing collection procedure
- Incorrect collection setting and seating
- Overfilling sharp containers
- Using incorrect method to dispose of needles
- Recapping of needles
- Lack of attention to detail
PREVENTING SHARPS / EXPOSURE INJURIES

- It is every worker’s responsibility under WHS legislation to protect the welfare of themselves, and others, whilst at work
- Always wear personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the task
- Monitor work area to ensure it is free from clutter and suitable for your own requirements
- Ensure the collection room has been setup correctly according to the Collection Procedure Manual COR-13. In the laboratory, consider location of sharps containers to ensure they suit your needs and it is securely placed which is practical and not easy to be knocked over.
- Take care and act responsibly
- Ensure staff who handles pathology specimens and biological samples are vaccinated against Hep B
- Report any safety issues to your manager or Health and Safety Representative immediately
STEP 1 – PREPARATION

- Ensure that you are prepared for the procedure that you are about to perform, assemble all equipment required, needlestick injuries can often occur when we are distracted and unprepared.
- Avoid stopping half way through a procedure to get additional equipment as again this can distract you from the task at hand.
- Ensure patient is aware of what is happening and is compliant, if patient is unclear about the procedure it may cause them to react in a way that may put you at risk.
STEP 2 – EQUIPMENT

- Ensure that you have all necessary equipment ready
- Don personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to the task, this could include gloves, eye protection, apron/lab gown
- Gloves must be worn during all procedures and when handling pathology specimens
- Always use a puncture resistant tray if transferring sharp instruments to another staff member never pass from hand to hand
STEP 3 - SAFE WORK TECHNIQUE

- Perform all procedures slowly and carefully giving your full attention to the task at hand
- Minimise the handling of sharp instruments, the less they are handled the less chance of a Needlestick/sharps injury occurring
- **Never** re-sheath or recap a needle
- Do not attempt to remove a needle from the syringe or vacutainer holder
STEP 4 – DISPOSAL OF SHARPS

- Each worker using sharps is responsible for the management and disposal of them
- Dispose of all sharps immediately and carefully with bevel / tip pointing downward
- Never bend needles contaminated with blood or body substance
- Let falling needles or sharp objects fall. Do not try and catch a falling object but rather wait until the object lands on a hard surface and carefully pick up
- Never overfill a sharps container
- Never force needles into sharps container
- Ensure lid on sharps container is securely sealed prior to disposal
SAFE DISPOSAL – VACUTAINER

Single use:

- After blood is transferred to tubes as per the protocol
- Immediately place needle and vacutainer barrel into sharps container
- Needle tip must be pointing downwards
SAFE DISPOSAL – BUTTERFLY

- After blood is transferred to tubes as per the protocol
- Once removed ensure that needle is retracted into yellow BD Safety-Lok device
- Dispose of needle, tubing and vacutainer barrel into sharps container
AUTOLOGOUS / VENESECTION

- All autologous and venesection collection bags have a needle safety guard (blue) in-situ.
- Following completion of the collection the needle must be retracted into the guard.
- When the needle has been removed from the patient's arm, hold the safety guard at the base, gently pull on the tubing until the needle is retracted into the guard.
- Remove and place safety guard and tubing into an appropriate sharps container. Never send the bag of blood to the laboratory with the sharps and tubing still attached.
SAFE DISPOSAL – SCALPELS, RAZORS AND OTHER SHARPS

- All blades, scalpels and razors must be disposed of immediately into sharps container
- Staff using a razor must take responsibility for correct disposal of used razor
- Razors cannot be placed in infectious waste bin
- Finger prick and Tenderfoot devices must also be immediately placed in sharps container after use
PLACEMENT OF SHARPS CONTAINER

- **For laboratory**, sharps containers should always be positioned securely in such a way to be practical, in a position not easy to be knocked over, and avoid the risk of having to over-reach.

- **For ACC**, sharps containers should always be safely secured to a trolley. DO NOT place on top of trolley as this poses a safety risk for collectors and patients. Trolley must always be placed as close as possible to ensure swift disposal of needles. It must NEVER be placed on the floor so that visitors, particularly children, do not easily access them.

- It is most important that dirty, unsheathed needles are not passed over clean equipment (i.e., Cotton balls, purzellin squares, tubes) as blood may splatter and contaminate

- As much as practicable minimise over-reaching to reduce the risk of soft tissue injury
HOME VISITS / MOBILE

- Encourage patients to sit at the kitchen/dining table. This allows for better set-up of equipment, minimises reaching/bending therefore allowing for better posture during collection.
- Always have sharps container as close to the patient as possible for easier, safer disposal of needle.
- Ensure all collection supplies are carried in the hard walled collectors kit.
- Never walk across the room with an unsheathed needle.
- During hospital collections, bring your trolley as close to the patient as possible. You may need to ask visitors to step aside. Then move chairs and obstacles from beside the patient wherever possible.
THE CONSEQUENCES OF A NEEDLESTICK / EXPOSURE INJURY

- An injury from a contaminated needle may potentially expose you to blood borne pathogens which may cause serious or fatal infections
- **Attend to First Aid immediately and seek medical attention**
- **CLEAN / DECONTAMINATE**
  - SKIN – let bleed freely. Wash with soap and running water. Refer to protocol “Needlestick Injury and Blood exposure” for further information.
  - MOUTH, NOSE and EYES - rinse well with water or saline
- Report the incident to your manager / supervisor immediately
- Complete the Incident Report form *(available on WHS Noticeboard)* and provide it to your manager / supervisor. Keep a copy for your records
- Your manager / supervisor will log the incident on Q-Pulse. WHS team will be notified via Q-Pulse.
- A free 24/7 counselling hotline from NSW Health (NSW Needlestick Injury Hotline – 1800 804 823) is available to assist you work through any issues or questions that may arise
- You are not alone. Immediate reporting ensures that the situation is controlled to remove stress often associated with these type of incidents
THANKYOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

This is the end of the presentation. You can now complete the quiz.

If you are uncertain of any of the presented material or would like further information please contact your Immediate Manager first who can then refer to the WHS Team.