Safer Work Practices For Home Nursing Care

Nurses and home care staff face a number of challenges due to the location of the tasks being performed.

Often there is minimal influence that can be made to the home environment. It is imperative that assessment of the environment for hazards and appropriate measures are taken to prepare the environment, the client and themselves for the task(s) that are to be performed.

When performing tasks where there is a potential Blood and Body Fluid (BBF) exposure, injections, IV initiation or access, handling sharps, changing a wound dressing etc. general or common BBF precautions and general sharps container practices must be followed.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, gowns and face shields must be worn whenever there is a potential for a BBF exposure.
  - PPE, including emergency resuscitation equipment (e.g. pocket mask) must be taken with you so that it is available when needed

- Wash hands before patient contact, after patient contact and removal of gloves.

- Place specimens in a leak resistant-plastic container for transport from the patient's home to the laboratory.

- If feasible, obtain assistance from family members when starting an IV, giving an injection or drawing blood from an uncooperative, combative or confused patient. If no help is available, delay the procedure until it can be safely performed and contact the physician for instructions.

- Before you begin a procedure with a sharp device, assure that you have a stable work surface and a needle disposal container available.

- Injections are one of the dominant procedures that are associated needlestick injuries.

- Teach patient to self-administer injections and proper sharps disposal practices when appropriate.

- Be aware that even a sneeze or cough can result in an unexpected movement.

- Pick up all broken glass and contaminated needles with forceps, brush and dust pan, or another tool to avoid hand contact.

- Assure that central line repair kits are available in the home of each patient with a central line.

- Butterfly needles are higher risk devices for needlesticks therefore:
  - limit the use of conventional devices;
  - always use a safety engineered butterfly where appropriate;
  - stretch out the butterfly tubing when removed from the package to reduce recoil;
  - use care when putting the needle in the disposal container so it does not flip out.

- Both Diagnostic and Infectious substances (blood and body fluids) must be contained in an appropriate container with suitable absorbent material to absorb any spills.
  - Public safety measures must be maintained in accordance with the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations (TDGR).
  - Leak-proof specimen containers are required for transporting specimens from the patient's home to the lab.
  - All specimens should be placed in plastic bags and sealed.
  - All diagnostic specimens must be contained in a type 1B package or rigid container that would meet the 1B criteria.
  - All infectious specimens must be contained in a type 1A package or rigid container that would meet the 1A criteria.

General Blood and Body Fluid Safe Work Practices

The purpose of safe work practices are to provide a safer work environment for health care workers who may be exposed to Blood and Body Fluids (BBF) by handling:

- Sharps
- Initiating intravenous or subcutaneous access
- Administering medication via IM, SC routes

Workers who may be exposed to other Blood and Body Fluids such as:

- Splashes
- Soiled laundry
- Bio-hazardous waste or
- Other body fluids.

By following appropriate procedures and practices you will have taken steps to improve the safety of co-workers, patients and your self.

Whenever possible, follow;

- Appropriate technique for administration and injection,
- Use a Safety Sharp
- Activate the Safety device after injection / access
- Immediately dispose of the sharp into a suitable sharps container at point of use

Sharps Containers

- Only approved sharps / biohazard containers should be used.

- Containers should have a fixed top or lid that prevents the contents from spilling out if tipped or knocked over. Containers should have a means of "locking" or securing the lid to prevent access to the contents when full.

- Sharps containers must be secured in the vehicle (e.g. trunk) to avoid movement and the spilling of contents for example:
  - **Placing the sharps container in a designated lidded container.**
  - **Securing the container with a cord or strap to prevent movement or tipping over.**

- Portable sharps containers should be used when a fixed container is not within close proximity.

- Sharps containers must be replaced when they are ¾ full or the fill line is reached.
  - This helps to prevent over filling or the protrusion of sharps.

- Ensure that the correct type of sharps container is being used.

- Improper disposal or handling of sharps presents a serious risk to others, including family caring for the patient, municipal and city workers who handle sanitization tasks.

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Home Nursing

Safe Work Practices

VANCOUVER ISLAND health authority