

Did you know?

Preventing needlestick injuries



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1,833 incident claims for needlestick injuries were received by NHS Resolution between 2012 - 2017 (fiscal years).

Of these, the 1,213 successful claims cost the NHS £4,077,441. The figure could be higher as 326 claims remain open.

The harm and cost are largely avoidable. Most sharps injuries can be prevented, and there are legal requirements on employers to take steps to prevent healthcare staff being exposed to infectious agents from sharps injuries.

If the NHS had not spent this, it could have funded 125 band 5 nurses for one year.

Between 2012 - 2017, **914** of the successful claims were received from ancillary workers (including cleaners, porters, laundry and maintenance staff) - employees exposed to sharps injuries because a primary user has not disposed of the needles correctly.

137 successful claims were made by clinical staff in the same period.

The two top types of injury claims coding are: psychiatric and orthopaedic.

People suffer stress and fear while waiting sometimes for months for results of potential

transmission of blood-borne viruses whilst receiving post-exposure prophylaxis treatment.

There are hidden costs of harm and money to the NHS and its staff:

- unpleasant and debilitating side effects of antiviral drugs causing suffering to employees and their families;
- backfill for sickness as a result of the incident; and
- resources for investigations.

Themes/red flags

Causes:

- non-compliance with standard infection control precautions;
- inadequate disposal of clinical waste;
- overfull sharps bins;
- not using safer sharps; and
- not using Personal Protective equipment.

Non-compliance with:

The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 -

“All employers are required under existing health and safety law to ensure that risk of sharps injuries from needles are adequately assessed, and that appropriate preventative and control measures are in place. The Sharps Regulations build on the existing law and provide specific detail on requirements that must be taken by healthcare employers and their contractors.”

By failing to prevent needlestick injuries, trusts can be found to be in breach of regulations, which could result in notices of contravention. You may also find your organisation facing costly legal claims.

1,833

claims received
between 2012 - 2017

Costing the NHS: £4,077,441



What could you do?

- Check training on correct disposal procedures is up-to-date
- Review your organisation's procurement of safer sharps versus conventional sharps
- Consider why you are not using safer sharps, is this habit or lack of awareness?
- Check training is implemented on the use of safer sharps
- Review your organisation's claims for needlestick injuries, costs and hidden costs - any extra cost of safer sharps is likely to reduce harm and the cost of legal claims
- See guidance on sharps safety:

www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/needlesticks/

www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-004135

Contact NHS Supply for information on safer sharps and your organisation's usage:

www.supplychain.nhs.uk/clinical-and-consumables/safer-sharps/

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For further information please contact:

safetyandlearningenquiries@resolution.nhs.uk

www.resolution.nhs.uk

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