



Helping to solve the achilles heel of Haemodialysis – vascular access

The Use Of Safer Sharps Fistula Needles For Cannulating Arteriovenous Fistulae And Grafts In The United Kingdom

Haemodialysis Units in the UK use large volumes of sharp fistula needles. Each patient with a fistula or graft undergoing a standard treatment regime of 3 times per week will be cannulated 312 times per year¹. As an example therefore a centre with 300 haemodialysis patients and a fistula/ graft prevalence of 75% will cannulate patients with sharp needles 70,200 time per year¹.

It is well documented that haemodialysis staff risk high exposure to blood borne viruses². A contributing factor to this is the use of hollow bore wide gauge sharp fistula needles in high volumes³.

NHS employers are required under existing law to ensure that risk from sharps injuries from needles are adequately assessed and that appropriate control measures are put in place⁴. Adherence to this law was further re-enforced by the health and safety executive regulations 2013⁴ and also the 2018 publication of the Clinical Practice Recommendations for Needling of Arteriovenous Fistulae and Grafts for Haemodialysis⁶.

Use of safer sharps (incorporating protection mechanisms) is an area that not all haemodialysis units comply with. Whilst an increasing number are making the transition to the use of safer sharps a significant number of units continue to use traditional sharps¹. The regulations stipulate that the employer must substitute traditional unprotected medical sharps with a “safer sharp” where it is reasonably practical to do so⁴.

NHS Resolution report 1,833 incident claims for needlestick injury between 2012-2017 costing the NHS to date £4,077,444 with 326 of these claims still unsettled. One of the causes cited by NHS resolution was not using safer sharps⁵.

NHS Resolution are actively encouraging employers to:

- Consider why you are not using safer sharps, is this habit or lack of awareness

- Check training is implemented on the safer use of sharps

- Review your organisations 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

To help haemodialysis centres to implement the legal requirements, regulations and clinical practice recommendations, surrounding this issue, xtra-med can assist with further education and training, change management support and can provide a range of safer sharps that meet the required criteria in the regulations.

Please contact xtra-med for further information.

1.Data on File xtra-med

2.Perry,J.Parker,G.,&Jagger,J. (2001) exposure safety- reducing sharps injuries in dialysis settings, nursing,78

3.NHS Employers handbook: www.nhsemployers.org/~media/employers/.../needlestick20injury.pdf

4.Health and Safety (sharp instruments in healthcare) regulations 2013, guidance for employers and employees, Health and Safety Executive

5.NHS Resolution- Di you know, preventing needlestick injuries, may 2017 www.nhsresolution.nhs.uk

6.Clinical Practice Recommendations for Needling of Arteriovenous Fistulae and Grafts for Haemodialysis

www.xtra-med.com

info@xtra-med.com

01663 733522

07717 660461