

Management of occupational exposure to blood and body fluids among health care workers in the National Hospital of Sri Lanka: an audit of practice

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Abstract :

Background: Occupational exposure to blood-borne viruses is an important issue for health care workers (HCWs). Guidelines for their management are known to be implemented sub optimally. Objectives: To assess the extent and pattern of occupational exposure to blood and body fluids among HCWs and their management, at the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL).

Methods: Data were collected from nursing and medical staff regarding exposures occurring within the preceding 6 months, using a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire.

Results: 155 health care workers, 102 (65.9%) nurses and 53 (34.2%) doctors, participated (response rate 55.36%). Needle stick injury was the commonest: 82 (59% of all injuries) among 60 HCWs. The least common was cuts with contaminated sharps (5.8 % of all injuries). Mean injury rate was 0.9 per person per 6 months. 69.81% of doctors and 38.23% of nurses had sustained at least one exposure. Nurses were more likely to wash/irrigate the injury site with water ($p=0.024$), report to the infection control unit ($p=0.024$) and seek further advice regarding the injury ($p=0.043$) than doctors. HIV antibody status of the patient was checked in 17.4% of the exposures. None received post exposure HIV prophylaxis. 89.2% of the exposures had had hepatitis B vaccination prior to the injury, but antibody levels were checked in only 11.5%.

Conclusions: Occupational exposure to blood-borne viruses are common among HCWs and are commoner among doctors. Basic post-exposure management appears unsatisfactory, especially among doctors.