

Section: Division of Nursing

Index: 7420.019a

PROCEDURE

Page: 1 of 1

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HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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OR
(Scope)

TITLE: HANDLING OF SHARPS AND NEEDLES AT STERILE FIELD

PURPOSE: To outline the procedure used to prevent injuries resulting for the passing of needles and sharps during surgical procedures.

SUPPORTIVE DATA:

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN), Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), all recommend that when there is occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens, engineering controls including safer medical devices are to be used to reduce the risk of injury from needles and other sharp medical instruments. The goal is to reduce the risk of needle stick and sharps injuries at the sterile field.

CONTENT:

PROCEDURE

KEYPOINT

1. Surgical team members should use hands-free techniques whenever possible and practical to pass contaminated needles and sharps during surgical procedure.
2. When passing contaminated needles and sharps use either an emesis basin or other puncture resistant device or a "neutral" zone where needles and sharp instruments can be put down and picked up rather than passed hand to hand.
3. Used needle should not be bent, broken, recapped or resheathed by hand. If recapping is required mechanical devices or one hand technique should be used.
4. Knife blades should be removed using an instrument or device.
5. Disposable sharps should be placed in a puncture-resistant, labeled container.
6. Reusable sharps should be placed in a puncture-resistant container or otherwise separated from other instruments as soon as possible after use. Towel clamps should be closed and placed tips down in trays.

Studies show that most sharps injuries occur when suture needles are passed between surgical team members.

Injuries occur when team members manually try to remove blades from knife handles using hands.

All sharps should be handled, removed and disposed of properly. Placing reusable sharps in separate container prevent injuries to personal responsible for cleaning instrumentation.

References: AORN Standards, Recommended Practices, and Guidelines (2003) Edition.
 AORN Journal, March 2002. Specialty Surgical Attire; sharps safety program; surgical attire, or visitors, OR medication administration – clinical Issues, Operating room.
 Garvin, Michael. Making The Operating Room a Safer Place. "Infection Control Today", October 2002