

Biosafety in Health Care Workers

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Health care workers (HCWs) are among those at highest risk of occupational biohazards, as they are exposed to human body fluids daily. They are exposed to blood-borne infections by pathogens, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B (HBV), and hepatitis C (HCV) and other blood-borne pathogens [1]. Needlestick and sharps injuries (NSSIs) have been one of the major issues in the protection of health care workers, and vigorous preventive action has been practiced worldwide in recent decades. NSSIs are an important occupational hazard in health care, and the distribution of risk does not occur at random [2]. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [3] have strongly supported the prevention of occupational sharps injuries. However, there are many countries like Portugal where biosafety is still a challenge and there is still a long way to go since there are very few studies conducted in this area. In a recent study of a hospital in this country, 53.7% of HCWs did not identify the symbol of biohazard and 44.9% reported about not having enough knowledge about universal precautions (unpublished data). Biosafety refers to the application of knowledge, techniques and equipment in order to prevent worker exposure to potentially infectious agents or biohazards. The differences in use of universal precautions by HCWs are influenced by their level of knowledge. The use of procedures to

control infection and universal precautions is effective in preventing cross-contamination. Risk of exposure is greatly minimized by the use of personal protective equipment, such as masks, lab coats and gloves [4]. A good understanding of the circumstances contributing to injuries among HCWs is also necessary. The availability of open access journals such as Biosafety journal from OMICS Group journals helps researchers in getting an easy access to knowledge in this health care field. Providing free access to all materials published is a strong contribution to health promotion for the health care workers.

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