

Low incidence of needlestick injuries among staff at national pharmacy chain

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Vaccinations for flu, tetanus and other common vaccines are increasingly taking place in non-medical settings such as supermarkets and drug stores. This added responsibility for pharmacists increases the risk of needlestick injuries (NSIs), puncture wounds often suffered while preparing or after use of a needle. NSIs can transmit bloodborne pathogens, including hepatitis C and HIV, from an infected patient to the person administering the vaccine.

A new report published in the November issue of [Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology](#), the journal of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, found 33 NSIs occurred at 31 different pharmacy locations of a nationwide retail pharmacy chain over an 11-year period. Over the same period of time, the chain administered more than 2 million vaccinations. Researchers calculated that the annual incidence of NSIs ranged from 0 to 3.62 per 100,000 vaccinations and 0 to 5.65 NSIs per 1,000 immunizing pharmacists. This incidence rate may represent an underestimation of NSIs since past studies have found that NSIs are often underreported by healthcare workers.

Most often NSIs were reported to have occurred after use and before disposal of the needle (58% of incidents) and during peak [influenza vaccination](#) months (79%).

"Pharmacists have become an emerging occupational group at risk of needlestick injuries," said Marie de Perio, MD, medical officer in the National Institute for [Occupational Safety and Health](#) at the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "While the incidence of needlestick injuries among employees at this retail [pharmacy chain](#) appears to be lower than that found in hospital settings, most of the injuries that did occur were likely preventable by following safe work practices."

Researchers recommend that the company continue to follow existing [CDC guidelines](#) to improve its NSI prevention program and add additional information to track the circumstances of the injury to help determine contributing factors.

More information: Marie A. de Perio, MD; "Needlestick Injuries among Employees at a Nationwide Retail Pharmacy Chain, 2000." *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* 33:11 (November 2012).

Provided by Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

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