

Health Care Providers and Professional Risk

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Abstract

Health care providers are most exposed to the professional risk such as hospital acquired infection and radiation due to close approximation with the patients or by products of the human body. Though the universal precaution, sterilization, disinfection, waste management or the sound practices adopted to prevent infections, still the chains of developing these infections are not zero. It is very difficult to prove the attributability if any employee is found positive with these infections, unless the accident was reported. There are chains that the employee would have developed the infection from other sources but not from the hospital, which he/she may deny. This becomes the responsibility of the hospital to protect the employees from these Hazards by providing suitable working environment / condition but at the same time the employees are equally responsible to protect themselves from the hazard by adopting the measures of preventions.

Keywords:

Universal Precautions; Infection control; Handwashing; Health care providers

Introduction

Both legal and ethical expect are involved by dealing with risk specially hospital acquired infections the life of the employee is associated with such conditions for which he/she may pose the responsibility in hospital in a view of the above it is also imperative to consider the following matters which are closely related,

- • Responsibility and accountability of the employer towards its employee.
- • Responsibility and accountability of the employee.
- • Standard Practices to be followed to prevent such hospital hazard/risks.
- • Legal and ethical responsibility of the employer to keep secret or disclose such risks.
- • Professional risk liability and compensation in case it is proved.

Literature Review

Universal precautions are the general guidelines developed by CDC Atlanta Centre for The Disease Control USA and Recommended by WHO Geneva to minimize the risk of infection from blood borne pathogens including Hepatitis B, and HIV infections in health care workers [1]. Although all

health care workers are exposed to get these diseases but workers engaged in following areas are potentially are at high risks:

- • Blood transfusion Unit
- • Intensive care unit
- • Dialysis unit
- • Medical laboratories
- • Operation Theatre
- • Microbiology
- • Dissection Room
- • Ward for infected patients
- • Sterilization and Disinfection room

Application of Universal Precaution

It has been recommended that all patients be assumed potentially infected with Hepatitis B, HIV or other communicable microorganism and appropriate precautions must be taken and practises applied to prevent transmission of all blood and body fluid infections among health care worker caring for all patients [2].

All health care workers are advised to adopt to save themselves.

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Use of Barrier precautions

Barrier precautions is used to prevent skin and mucus membrane to be exposed to blood or other body fluids from any patients when such exposure is anticipated. Barrier precautions include gloves, masks, protective eyewear, face shield, gown, apron etc. Barrier precautions should be changed after contact with each patient and if any barrier is torn of needle stick and other injury occurred [3].

Hand and skin washing

Hand or any skin in contact with body fluid should be washed thoroughly with soap under running water. This is a most easy and economical practice [4].

Prevent Injury

Precaution to be taken to prevent injury caused by needle, scalpel and other sharps. Never try to recapping or reinsert the hypodermic disposable needle in its bag n cap /sheet. It is the commonest mode of needle stick injury in the health care workers. All used disposable needle, syringe must be discarded in puncture resistant container after use preferably wide mouth plastic container with a cap.

Adequate resuscitation devices

All the resuscitation Devices used in these types of patients should be made available in plenty and discarded after use e.g. Plastic disposable airway, endotracheal tube and ventilation device.

Beware of your own skin

If health care workers have exposed skin lesion or weeping dermatitis, they should refrain from all direct contact and handling equipment until the condition resolved [5]. If it is not possible strict barrier precaution should be used.

Sterilization

Sterilize all reusable device end surfaces such as OT instruments, Linen, hand paces, mortuary equipment, instruments used in pathological laboratory with appropriate germinal and sterilizer preferably autoclave.

Hospital waste management

Biohazard waste generated in the hospital to be aggravated at the point of generation. Safe methods for handling, collection and transportation to be followed by staff as prescribed by rules from by ministry of environment.

Caution to pregnant Women

If health care worker developed HIV during pregnancy, the infant is at risk of infection resulting to prenatal transmission. As for as possible pregnant women should avoid handling AIDS patients.

Notification of health care worker who are exposed accidentally

- • Exposed area must be washed with soap and water.
- • Blood and other body fluid must be removed and clean under running tap water with soap.
- • Notify the accident to hospital authority and exposed person is evaluated for serological evidence of HIV infection as soon as possible after accident. If found positive immediately after infection, it can be concluded that the accident is not a cause of seropositive result as it takes minimum 2 weeks for seroconversion. If found negative then evaluation is repeated after ½ month, 3 months,6 months and 12 months after exposure. If still negative it can be concluded that HIV transmission did not occur. If found positive after 2 weeks, the opinion of expert to be sought.
- • Risk of health Care Worker to develop Hospital-acquired Infection can be made negligible if a worker observes proper safety measures. Practising good infection control measure is a key to protect these diseases.

Information and training

In order to protect Hospital Worker, the Hospital authorities must provide general information about the danger to be faced in practices, the ways in which AIDS and Hepatitis are transmitted and must give general training with mass awareness to the hospital staff. It can be concluded that hospital staff and authorities other are equally responsible and accountable for transmission of these hospital - acquired information. Legally hospital is bound to provide such facilities to its staff, which prevent the transmission, but morally staff is also equally responsible if the staff does not fallow standard practices.

Conclusion

Professional risk liability and compensation is another controversial issue, which is very difficult to prove in the event of detecting positive cases as attributability is not actually established. The only answer of many questions is Universal Precautions.

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