

TRANSITION TIMES

UCSF STANFORD HEALTH CARE

Special Edition: Transition Times for April 14, 1998

Transition Times is a biweekly publication of UCSF Stanford Health Care. The goal is to provide quick, timely updates on current activities, decisions and plans for the employees and physicians working at UCSF Stanford Health Care facilities.

A message from Bruce Wintroub, chief medical officer of UCSF Stanford Health Care

Many of you may have read an article on the front page of today's San Francisco Chronicle, which depicted needlesticks among health care workers as an epidemic. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control has recorded 45 documented cases to date of needlesticks and cuts leading to HIV infection and 24 resulting in AIDS nation wide. While there is no evidence of a wide spread problem, I want to assure you that we take this issue very seriously.

At UCSF Stanford Health Care hospitals, we have been a leader in testing new safety devices, training health care workers in proper procedures and encouraging safe work practices since the late 1980s. Our safety standards are established by multidisciplinary groups including representatives from employee health, infectious disease, infection control, safety and materials management departments.

We provide our employees with all available instruments that incorporate safety devices. These safety devices generally involve a protective sheath that covers the tip of the needle after it has punctured the skin. In some cases, this occurs automatically, as with self-retracting devices used to prick a finger or heel for a blood sample. In other cases, the person using the instrument must activate a mechanism to uncover or to cover the needle with a protective sheath.

We recognized early in the development of safety devices that education about the need for the equipment and training in its use is as important as making the devices available. In fact, ours were among the first required programs in the nation to educate and train health care workers in the use of safety devices.

Each site provides ongoing staff training in the proper use of safety devices through regular education programs, safety fairs and other methods. We monitor and test new equipment as it becomes available.

UCSF Stanford also provides specialized service, including immediate counseling and treatment, to employees who sustain needlesticks.

I want to assure you that we are making every effort to ensure the safety of our employees. If you would like more information regarding safety devices, please contact Nick Gaich, director of materials management at Candlestick Point, (415) 514-4626, or the Infection Control Program at your site.

Bruce Wintroub, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer
UCSF Stanford Health Care

Information about Transition Times and the Communications Hot Line

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