

Headline	<b>Take precautions against needlestick injuries</b>	Language	<b>English</b>
Date	<b>15 Apr 2010</b>	Page No	<b>B2</b>
MediaTitle	<b>Borneo Post (KK)</b>	Article Size	<b>359 cm<sup>2</sup></b>
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# Take precautions against needlestick injuries

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Injuries and cuts caused by sharp medical instruments among healthcare personnel in the clinical environment warrant serious attention due to the existence of highly infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C apart from the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

According to Cheah May Choo, the marketing manager for B. Braun Medical Supplies Sdn Bhd's Hospital Care Division, a study carried out at a local hospital showed that the majority of healthcare personnel affected by these injuries were nurses.

Among these sharps (sharp medical instruments) injuries, the majority is that caused by the needlestick, she said.

Among the needles used in the hospital or clinical environment are the hypodermic (injection) needles used to administer medications and fluids, that used to take blood samples as well as the fistula needles used in haemodialysis.

According to Cheah, needlestick injuries are wounds caused by needles that accidentally puncture

the skin.

"Needlestick injuries are a hazard for people who work with hypodermic syringes and other needle equipment.

"Accidental punctures by contaminated needles can inject hazardous fluids into the body through the skin. There is potential for injection of hazardous drugs but injection of infectious fluids, especially blood, is by far the greatest concern," she said.

Even small amounts of infectious fluid can spread certain diseases effectively.

Cheah said accidental injection of blood-borne viruses is the major hazard of needlestick injuries, especially the viruses that cause AIDS (the HIV virus), Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Cheah said needlestick injuries are a common hazard. Some hospitals report one third of nursing and laboratory staff suffer such injuries each year.

How does this injury come about?

"Needlestick injuries can occur during and after using the device due to a variety of

reasons. These include working conditions, the nature of the procedure, experience of healthcare workers and disposal of the device.

"Some commonly occur when workers dispose of needles. They occur when staff are using special containers for needles and sharps. They also occur when needles are disposed of improperly in regular garbage bins or lost in the workplace," said Cheah.

Up to 30 per cent of needlestick injuries of

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nursing and laboratory staff occur when workers attempt to dispose needles using 'sharps containers'.

The accidents may also occur while carrying the needle to the disposal container, especially when the needle is uncapped and mixed with other trash.

"The injuries can occur while placing the needle into an overfilled disposal container or while emptying disposal containers instead of using properly sealed bags before being sent for proper disposal."

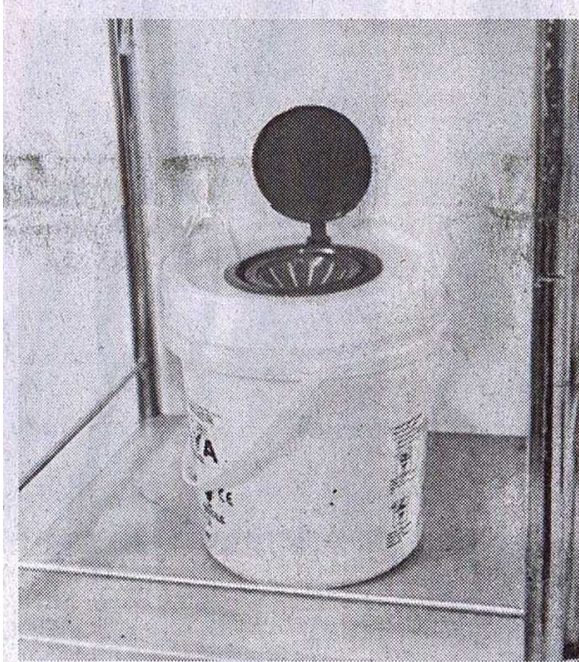
She said virtually all needlestick injuries of domestic and portering housekeeping staff are from needles that have either been lost in the workplace or thrown into regular normal garbage.

Janitors and garbage handlers can also experience needlestick injuries or cuts from 'sharps' when handling trash that contains needles or scalpels, she said.

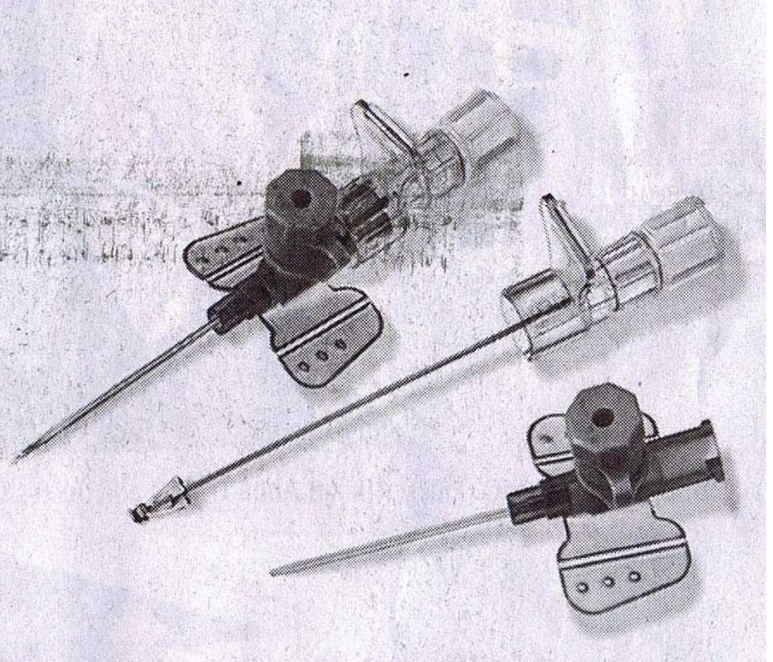
Preventing needlestick injuries is the most effective way to protect workers from the infectious diseases that needlestick accidents transmit.

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Needlestick injuries can be prevented with the use of special disposal devices for needles and sharp objects. - Bernama photo



Most needlestick injuries can be prevented with the use of safety devices. - Bernama photo