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Reducing the risks to health care workers from blood and body fluid exposure in a small rural hospital in Thabo-Mofutsanyana, South Africa

CITATION

Nkoko L, Spiegel J, Rau A, Parent S & Yassi A. 2014. Reducing the risks to health care workers from blood and body fluid exposure in a small rural hospital in Thabo-Mofutsanyana, South Africa. *Workplace Health & Safety*, 62(9): 382-388.

ABSTRACT

Healthcare workers in sub-Saharan Africa are at high risk of acquiring blood-borne diseases. A training programme was launched to build the capacity of occupational health nurses to design and implement workplace-based projects. The study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of healthcare workers regarding blood and body fluid exposures in a small district hospital in a rural area of the Free State in South Africa. Under the guidance of two experienced mentors, an occupational health nurse designed a knowledge, attitudes, and practices questionnaire and distributed it to 101 healthcare workers at risk throughout the hospital; 88% of questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes.

Limited knowledge and ineffective practices were documented. For example, only 54.3% of the respondents reported that needles should never be recapped. A significant correlation ($p < .001$) was found between limited knowledge and recent blood and body fluid exposure. The study results provided the occupational health nurse with data to address the knowledge, attitudes, and practices deficits by implementing an injury-prevention educational intervention. Such training initiatives can decrease the burden of occupational disease among healthcare workers in rural low-resourced areas.