Infectious Diseases among Healthcare Workers

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Abstract

The healthcare industry employs over one million workers in Korea and encompasses a usually broad spectrum of occupations and related exposures. There are so many biological exposures in healthcare settings, including blood-borne pathogens, HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, air-borne pathogens such as tuberculosis, and a wide variety of respiratory viruses. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates the global burden of disease (GBD) from occupational exposure to be 40% of Hepatitis B and C infections and 2.5% of the human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections among Healthcare workers (HCWs). Some countries have used surveillance systems to monitor national trends and incidence rates of occupational infections among HCWs; identify newly emerging hazards for HCWs; assess the risk of occupational exposures and infections; and evaluate preventive measures including engineering controls, work practices, protective equipment, and post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent occupational infections. Infection control programs such as engineering control in medical facilities, immunization, post exposure prophylaxis, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) have been widely introduced to reduce occupational infections among HCWs. Thus some developed countries which have actively introduced infection control program have decreased incidences of occupational infectious diseases among HCWs. This study describes the epidemiologic characteristics of occupational infectious diseases among HCWs, the kinds of surveillance system to monitor infectious diseases among HCWs, and infection control measures that apply to healthcare settings.

Keywords: Healthcare workers; Infectious diseases; Needle stick injury; Surveillance system; Hepatitis

Table 1

Healthcare Personnel Vaccination Recommendations by U.S. Public Health Service (30)
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Health care workers (HCW) have an extra risk of getting infected from their workplace and yet they are... potentially infectious body fluids was high and yet only a small percentage of HCW were vaccinated. There is need to vaccinate all health care workers as a matter of policy and ensure a safer work environment. Background. Globally there are about 360 million chronic carriers of B infection among health workers in Uganda: evidence of the need for health worker protection. Vaccine 2006, 24(47-48):6930-6937. 25. Ganju SA, Goel A: Prevalence of HBV and HCV infection among health care workers (HCWs). J Comm un Dis 2000, 32(3):228-230. Work-acquired infectious diseases are among the risks all healthcare workers face; and bloodborne pathogens figure prominently among these. Occupational exposure to blood and body fluids is well documented among healthcare workers. Annual exposure prevalence rates range from <10% to 44%, depending on the occupational subgroup (34). These threats to safety of the nurse and other essential healthcare workers are of concern for many reasons. First, a trained, qualified healthcare workforce is necessary to respond and care for the public in the event of an outbreak. Staffing issues and hospital organization problems are believed to have complicated the containment of the SARS crisis in Toronto.