

## LEADING THE TREND:

### *Allergy Offices are Using Safety Syringes*

The Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act went into effect in April 2001, thereby amending the existing Bloodborne Pathogen Standard administered by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by mandating that safety-engineered devices with advanced protection features be made available for use by healthcare workers to prevent sharps injuries. This directive was an effort to protect healthcare workers from the approximately 800,000 reported needlestick injuries that were occurring in the United States annually (1). One study revealed that most of these needlestick injuries resulted from unsafe needle devices rather than carelessness by healthcare workers (2).



Despite implementation of the Act, it is estimated that only 20 percent (3) of allergy practices in the United States have converted to the use of safety sharps products. Nurses in an allergist's office routinely handle dozens of needles, leaving them susceptible to a needlestick injury which could result in exposure to bloodborne pathogens. So why have so few clinics made the switch?

The reluctance to adhere to the federal mandate may be explained by a number of factors: Safety products may be seen as cumbersome or may require a change in administration technique; some users may not see the need for the safety feature because of a low perceived risk of injury; or because safety products are more expensive. Irv Handel, RN, Allergy Immunology and Medical (Stockton, CA), was surprised to learn that so few in

his field use safety products. "While they may be more expensive, the safety syringes do prevent contaminated needlesticks. We started out reluctant to use them and for a while had to give a little extra thought to engage the safety mechanism, but we got the hang of it." While Jane Duncan, RN, Dr.

Morad Jacobson's office (Carol Stream, IL) understood that switching to safety syringes might seem less convenient, "it was not a big deal. I think we all realize why we are using them—we don't want a needlestick. You would be hard pressed to find a nurse who hasn't had a needlestick, but I'm not aware of any needlesticks in our office since we started using the safety syringes. It's a

federal mandate, it's for my protection, and it's the policy of our office.”

For those allergists' offices that now utilize a safety syringe, the product of choice appears to be



the **BD SafetyGlide™ Allergy Syringe Tray**. The reason for the popularity of the BD safety syringe (manufactured and sold by Becton, Dickinson and Company, Franklin Lakes, NJ), is likely related to the product's easy-to-use, single-handed design. Because of the busy environment in which she works, Diana Lathers, RN, Center for Allergy and Asthma Care (Altoona, PA), reports that her main criteria for choosing a safety device was that she could activate it by using just one hand. “We changed to a safety syringe

because of the OSHA regulations. When compared to some of the other safety products that we tried, I liked the fact that the BD SafetyGlide Allergy Syringe is one-handed, which is imperative when giving 200 to 300 allergy injections. It would slow us down otherwise. We have a waiting room with standing room only and every second counts. After I've given an injection, I can quickly cover up the needle and I don't have to use my other hand.”

Mr. Handel said that before switching to the BD SafetyGlide Allergy Syringe he tried a few other products and found that “the BD safety mechanism was superior to others. With the other products, the way that you activated the safety wasn't as convenient. With the BD SafetyGlide Allergy Syringe, it's easy. You can do it with one hand—after you inject, you flip it and—bang—it's done and your finger never really gets close to the needle. Since using the BD safety syringe, we haven't experienced any needlesticks with the safety engaged, nor have we gotten stuck trying to engage it.”

Using safety devices for injection not only complies with OSHA regulations, it provides protection and peace of mind for clinicians and their families. As can be gleaned by the testimonials of several nurses who currently use the BD safety products, their compliance has resulted in safer working environments. As more allergy offices follow this trend and incorporate safety products into their practices, they too will be further safeguarding their employees' health and well-being.



For more information about BD SafetyGlide Allergy Syringe Trays or other BD products, please call 1-800-317-3996; visit a company representative at ACAAI, booth #537; or visit the company's Web site at [www.bd.com/allergy](http://www.bd.com/allergy).

### References:

1. Epinet, Exposure Prevention information network data reports: University of Virginia International Health Care Worker Safety Center, 1999.
2. *JSH&Q*, Summer 1998.
3. Data on file with HPIS Market Intelligence™ a GHX company.