

Making a Difference in Sharps Safety



2009
International Sharps
Injury Prevention
Awards

by Ron Stoker

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hen I was a boy my mother and father used to frequently read to me and my siblings. Many nights would find us gathered around the rocking chair as they would read to us stories of explorers and adventurers. I had several favorites that I enjoyed.

I remember stories of Thomas Edison, Madame Marie Curie and Louis Pasteur. These individuals influenced many aspects of my life, including a desire to apply the scientific method to areas of my life.

I remember reading many stories on my own as I desired to learn more about these individuals. I read about the many fascinating inventions for which Thomas Edison received patents; this influenced me greatly. I read silly children's stories like the "Encyclopedia Brown" series. I ended up mimicking the protagonist and placed pulleys and ropes all over my bed, so that when I got out of bed all I had to do was pull two ropes and the sheets and covers pulled up to the top of the bed and my bed was made!

We all need heroes and others who we look up to in our lives. They can help us to make changes and adjustments in the way we do things. At this time of year we have an opportunity of honoring some of those heroes who are making a difference in reducing needlestick and other sharps injuries.

As I sit down to write this, it has been nine years since the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. It has been more than eight years since the revised Bloodborne Pathogen Standard went into effect with fines and citations. Needlestick injuries are still occurring. Most healthcare workers have either suffered needlestick injury or know someone who has experienced a needlestick injury. Many facilities have adopted safety devices but not all. Sharps injuries are still being reported. But some individuals are making a difference in reducing these unnecessary injuries by implementing policies and procedures. The following individuals are being honored by the International Sharps Injury Prevention Society (ISIPS) and *Managing Infection Control* magazine for their accomplishments toward reducing needlestick and other sharps injuries.

AWARD WINNERS

As part of the 2009 International Sharps Injury Prevention Month, ISIPS and *Managing Infection Control* magazine present the recipients of the 2009 International Sharps Injury Prevention Awards.

This prestigious award is given to only a few individuals each year. Five deserving individuals have been notified and have accepted their 2009 International Sharps Injury Prevention Awards. In addition, several individuals have been recognized with honorable mentions. ISIPS and *Managing Infection Control* congratulate and thank these individuals for making a difference in spreading the message of sharps injury prevention to healthcare workers and employers around the globe. This award is one way of saying thank you for reducing the number of healthcare workers and others who are injured by needlestick and other sharps injuries each year.

Presenting this year's distinguished winners:

Lisa Black
Lucinda Brown
Mary Hotaling
Joseph Howard
Margaret Lampark

Lisa Black

Lisa Black, PhD, RN is an assistant professor at the Orvis School of Nursing at the University of Nevada, Reno and an active proponent of safe-needle legislation to protect healthcare workers from the potentially devastating effects of needlestick injury.

In her quest for safer practices, Ms. Black notes her greatest initial challenge was getting healthcare agencies to see the value in investing in healthcare worker safety. "It's all too easy to look



Lisa Black, PhD, RN

at low numbers of workplace transmission, and assume that the status quo is acceptable," she says. "It took a long time to get the industry on board."

Ms. Black learned the devastating consequences of sharps injury from personal experience. In 1997, she endured an occupational needlestick injury that infected her with HIV and hepatitis C. "My needlestick and infections were entirely preventable," says Black. "I am committed to effecting positive change in the healthcare market to prevent healthcare workers from continuing to be exposed to preventable occupational transmission of these diseases."

As her steadfast efforts have taken hold, when working with students in clinical agencies Ms. Black finds her greatest success: needle designs are no longer a topic of debate. "The nurses that we are now bringing into the profession have never worked in a setting where needle-free and/or safer needle equipment was not the norm," she explains.

"I am truly humbled to have been selected for this award," Black states. "It is an honor to be recognized for having contributed to the changes that have made our healthcare settings safer, both for patients and those who care for them."

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—Lisa Black, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor,
Orvis School of Nursing, University of Nevada, Reno

Lucinda Brown



Lucinda Brown

Serving as the Director of Occupational Health Services at Children's Hospital Boston, Lucinda Brown is responsible for the health and safety of more than 13,000 employees. She has initiated programs around safe needle use and championed the development and use of needlestick performance improvement metrics through the institution's safety committee for tracking and trending.

"In 2008, we successfully reduced injuries by 8 percent over the previous year—and by 32 percent over the previous four years," Brown

states. Key strategies included identifying workable safety devices, workflow analysis and modification, education and training.

Key to the success was defining a way to measure progress. "Our multi-disciplinary team defined different numerators for different areas of the hospital," explains Brown. "For inpatient areas, we used patient bed days. For the OR, we used procedures. For ambulatory and ED areas, we used visits. This helped define a sharps injury rate that accounted for growth in volume, while making sense for that department. We developed a report card for each inpatient unit, four-year trend data for their unit, and specific information on each of their injuries. We began deep data analysis for the inpatient units, and plan to do the same for the OR sharp injuries next."

Establishing the programs has not been without challenges. "Defining the appropriate measure of success and threshold was a major challenge," says Brown. "It is overly simplistic to say our goal is zero injuries. Studies estimate that only one in four sharps injuries are even reported, so we may find that an increase in reporting is an improvement." Other challenges include the limited options of safety devices for very small babies, and keeping the issue of safety and prevention alive in the organization.

"The most rewarding part of this project has been working with the brilliant team of people from health and safety, infection control, patient services, ambulatory services, and emergency management," says Brown. "We have interesting and heated discussions about how best to protect workers and I have felt enormous support from them and our leadership. Occupational health is often neglected and under-resourced. At Children's Hospital Boston, we are an integral part of the team promoting health and safety for workers."

As with other champions in the quest for safer sharps practices, the fact that bloodborne pathogen exposures create extreme anxiety and potentially serious injury for healthcare workers is a serious motivator for Ms. Brown's efforts. "We all know of cases in which someone has contracted a disease, or had to take prophylaxis medication which made them very ill," she says. "We know that meaningful risk assessments, prevention strategies, and post-exposure prophylaxis all depend on accurate reporting and analysis. Sharps injuries are preventable, and we are motivated to keep people safe and productive while working at Children's."

Taken by surprise in learning about the award, Ms. Brown reflects on the team's achievements. "Last year I spent most of my time on sharps injury prevention and measurement, but this year it's all about flu," she says. "It has forced me to look back at the incredible work we have

been doing over the past few years and it is wonderful for the entire team to be recognized for their contribution to this important program."

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—Lucinda Brown, Director of Occupational Health Services, Children's Hospital Boston

Mary Hotaling



Mary Hotaling, MS, MT(ASCP)DLM

Mary Hotaling, MS, MT(ASCP)DLM has more than 25 years experience in clinical laboratory administration and education and is currently the quality systems manager and laboratory safety officer at the Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center in West Isle, N.Y. She is responsible for laboratory

quality, safety, and regulatory oversight for three hospitals and regional core facility.

Ms. Hotaling is an invited speaker and consultant helping healthcare organizations meet the ever-changing regulatory, quality and safety challenges. She is the author of several book chapters as well as articles on regulatory compliance and sharps safety; the latest published in 2009 in the Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety.

As the newly appointed laboratory safety officer in 2002, Ms. Hotaling was charged with fully implementing OSHA's revised Bloodborne Pathogens Standard for the Laboratory. "In this process, as I studied the laboratory phlebotomists' needlestick injuries, it became evident they experienced a disproportionate number of butterfly needlestick injuries even though we were using a 'safety' butterfly needle device," she explains. "This led to a quest to discover the root cause that appeared to be 'preventable' for the majority on injuries. This evidence ultimately led to a search for an alternative safety butterfly device to target the identified problem prone phlebotomy steps."

Ms. Hotaling has found the greatest challenge in leading efforts on sharps injury prevention was the paucity of peer-reviewed

research studies clearly demonstrating the efficacy of needlestick safety devices in order to balance the significantly higher cost of newly introduced “second generation” safety devices. “The device I attempted to justify was newly introduced and therefore were no published efficacy studies making the justification process lengthy,” she states. “The other challenge is the low frequency of reported needlesticks, again which makes small, short term pilot studies statistically inconclusive.”

In discussing her efforts toward sharps safety, Ms. Hotaling feels her greatest achievement was facilitating the laboratory phlebotomist and nursing staff’s identification, selection, and implementation of a second-generation sharps safety device that reduced our facility’s reported butterfly needlestick injuries by 90 percent.

“In this effort I had the very good fortune to have closely collaborated with the former RN Director of Infection Control, Joan Reilly, RN (CIC); Employee Health Services Coordinator, JoAnn Deacon, RN; and Regional Vice President, Laboratory Services, Alfred Palma, under the auspices of the hospital’s sharps safety committee,” she says. “The most personally rewarding aspect was publication of my article describing this needlestick prevention PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) quality improvement project in the Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety in 2009. The motivation to write this article was to present the type of peer-reviewed literature I was searching for in order to effectively study our needlestick incidents, select a safer safety device, and finally through the justification, implementation and ongoing monitoring.”

When asked about her reaction to winning this year’s award, Ms. Hotaling commented, “I am very honored to be joining the esteemed company of Adelisa Panilio, MD, Gina Pugliese, MS, Robyn Gershon, PhD, and the other ISIPS Sharps Injury Prevention Award winners. These authors and the ISIPS Web site and *Managing Infection Control* magazine were wonderful sharps injury prevention resources I utilized as I studied our staff’s sharps injuries, identified and evaluated alternative safety devices, and in the justification process.”

Joseph M. Howard



Joseph M. Howard,
RN, COHN

As an employee health and wellness nurse at Marion General Hospital in Marion, Ohio for the past five years, Joseph M. Howard, RN, COHN oversees the health and wellness of 1,100 healthcare workers. He has been working in occupational health since 1991 at three different hospitals and also as an industrial nurse at a steel plant. In his current position he oversees vaccination

programs, ensures OSAH and JCAAHO compliance on health records, conducts post-exposure follow up and minor injury treatment, and formulates wellness programs.

One of Mr. Howard’s primary functions in occupational health is the prevention of injury. In his mission to prevent needlestick injuries, he notes that treatment of exposures indicates that the system doesn’t always achieve that goal. “I know that every time I have to wait for hepatitis B and C, and HIV, results there’s a chance I’ll have to deliver bad news.”

Communication, getting the word out to nurses on the frontline, is one of his greatest challenges. “The best laid plans and strategies for reducing injuries are worthless if the information doesn’t make it to the people affected,” he states.

Using effective communications was key to the team effort at Marion General Hospital in reducing the incidence of needlesticks. For Mr. Howard and the team it was a rewarding experience to get the number of needlesticks reduced from three per month to one. “This was a team effort from the entire administration,” Howard states. “The safety director, materials manager, worker’s comp specialist, infection control, clinical nursing managers, staff developers, education coordinators, and sharps sales reps all offered input and assistance.”

Humble regarding his role in the process, Howard notes, “I was just the disseminator of the effort in the role of communicating to the nursing staff. It never ends either. Without constant reminders, it will backslide. There’s never a time to rest on your laurels! This is truly a team effort.”

Margaret Lampark

Margaret Lampark, BSN, RN, COHN-S leads the associate health and wellness program at Weaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints in Racine, Wis. She has worked diligently as an ongoing advocate of associate safety in decreasing needlesticks and reducing exposure to bloodborne pathogens. As noted by her nominator, Sr. Jay Nelson, “Her leadership has made our program the best I have worked with in my 20-plus years in infection control.”

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Nominations for this year’s awards have once again been truly outstanding. We would like to recognize the following individuals for the contributions they have made. It is through their efforts that the healthcare work environment continues to improve in the many areas impacting safe sharps practices.

Please join us in congratulating the 2009 Sharps Injury Prevention honorees.

Robin George

Robin H. George, RN, CIC recently became a member of the Employee Health Department at Memorial Healthcare System in Chattanooga, Tenn. For 10-plus years prior to this,

she was an infection control preventionist in an active, progressive IC program. During this time sharps injuries and bloodborne pathogen compliance became a special project for Ms. George. Over the last five to six years, her organization's greatest accomplishment regarding sharps injuries has occurred in the surgical services department. With the introduction of heightened awareness, neutral zone passing, shielded safety scalpels and blunt suture, sharps injuries decreased an average of 35 percent to 40 percent annually. Ms. George notes that this change was only possible through the staunch support of the surgical services executive team, including director, Lisa Fitzsimmons; medical director, Charles Portera, Jr; chief of surgery, Samuel Currin; and educator, Wendy Clarke.

Ann Higgins

Ann Higgins, MSc, RGN/RSCN has fought for five years to introduce a needle-free system to her hospital. Currently serving as assistant director of nursing, infection prevention and control, at Mater Private Hospital in Dublin, Ireland, she has been working in infection prevention and control since 1998 with a strong commitment to the safe practices for both patients and staff. Ms. Higgins considers monitoring staff blood exposure incidents and actions to reduce the risk of such incidents an important part of her role. By monitoring these incidents by causative device, Ms. Higgins has been able to identify the most common devices involved in needlesticks in her hospital.

The commitment of Mater Private to best practice and quality has provided the funding to research and introduce

safety devices where possible. This year alone has seen the introduction of safety devices for phlebotomy, intra muscular injections and subcutaneous injections. The staff are also currently reviewing safety devices for cannulation which when implemented will lead to an almost needle-free ward environment.

Julia Naunheim Hipps

Julia Naunheim Hipps, RN, BSN is a clinical educator for Retractable Technologies Inc., providing sharps safety training to hospitals, health departments, nursing homes, prisons and other medical facilities across the United States and Canada on the proper use of the VanishPoint® syringes, blood collection devices, IV catheters, and Patient Safe™ syringes. Her passion is to help healthcare workers understand the importance of preventing unnecessary needlestick injuries in the workplace (and the burden of the consequent costs to our healthcare system).

Lisa Starr

Lisa Starr is responsible for product design, production and sales for Starr Systems LLC. The Kansas-based company recently introduced its innovative Disposable Ampoule Breaker (DAB) to the medical industry. The DAB is designed as a safety tool to protect healthcare workers from lacerations and injury while opening glass ampoules. The DAB is available in three sizes and will be available in single use and tray configurations. The Starr DAB has been selected as a preferred safety product by a major hospital group and is available nationally through Owens & Minor. †

International Sharps Injury Prevention Winner's Circle

<p>2008</p> <p>Karen Daley Elizabeth Donnenwirth Kaj Johansson Dr. Adelisa L. Panlilio Dr. Abimbola Sowande Gina Pugliese Thomas J. Shandera</p>	<p>2007</p> <p>Gail J. Callas Carol DiGiacoma Jan Elovitz Cothron Nancy L. Hughes Angela K. Laramie Janie Ott Christine Pionk</p>	<p>2006</p> <p>Letitia Goodman Donna Jean Haiduven Eileen Johnson Bonnie Kashmiri Dr. Janice Neubauer Becky McKinney</p>	<p>2005</p> <p>Brian French Dr. Robyn Gershon Renee Gould Susan Loomis Elizabeth Maccario</p>
<p>2004</p> <p>Lt. Cmdr. Paul Andre Diane Baranowsky Dr. Burton Kunik Sally Peerbolt</p>	<p>2003</p> <p>Diane Crawford Kathi Miller Brian K. Reaux Susan Taylor Bruce G. Weniger</p>	<p>2002</p> <p>Rep. Cass Ballenger Gerald I. Brecher Beverly Campbell Barbara DeBaun Jennifer Hawbaker Ron Luther Thomas J. Shaw Michael W. Smith Connie Steed Tim Truitt</p>	<p>WINNERS CIRCLE International Sharps Injury Prevention Awards</p> <p>Acknowledged for their dedication to sharps injury prevention, the 2009 Sharps Injury Award winners are welcomed into the Sharps Injury Prevention Winner's Circle, which includes the following recipients from 2002 through 2008.</p>