Abstract:

Healthcare staff are at risk of infections if they are exposed to bloodborne pathogens from needlestick injuries (NSIs). In 2010, the European Union adopted a directive to prevent injuries and infections to healthcare workers from sharp objects, including NSIs. It recommended an integrated approach to preventing these injuries; this includes risk assessment, training and the provision of safety needle devices (SNDs). This directive has to be enshrined in UK legislation by May 2013. NSIs are under reported, but nearly half of nurses may have had such an injury. NSIs occur in many clinical areas, often when nurses are busy or tired, and most are caused by conventional hollow-bore needles. SNDs, if implemented and used correctly, reduce the risk of NSI. This article examines: the legislation; the prevalence of NSI; the risk of infection transmission; devices and procedures associated with NSI; SNDs; and costs of NSIs and SNDs.