Sharp Safety Within The Healthcare Service And The Safety Measurements

This essay will outline the meaning of sharp safety within the healthcare service and the safety measurements, which surround the use of them. It will also consider the element of danger if used incorrectly.

According to (Health and Social Care Services, 2019), sharps are a medical word used for any instrument which has a sharp point or edge that can pierce or puncture the skin. Within the medical field, these can be instruments such as needles or scalpels that are necessary to carry out medical procedures.

Sharps are considered biomedical waste due to the risk of being contaminated with blood, thus potentially posing a risk of transmitting infectious fluids such as hepatitis B, C or V and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). They tend to cause injury when instruments are not properly covered and disposed of, The Royal College of Nursing (2013), states that most sharps injuries can be avoided and that there are legal policies and procedures all healthcare staff must adhere to in-order to prevent such injuries.

The Health and Safety Executive (2019) states that most incidents are caused due to staff failing to adhere to standard precautions. The following Acts must be taken into consideration when dealing with any sharp's procedure, The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002, The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 and The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

Sharp injuries are a well-known risk for all healthcare workers with injuries affecting over 400,000 staff and costing the NHS over £4 million (NHS employers, 2015). Most needle stick injuries in 2014 showed that 65% of injuries were caused during actual procedures, 18% after procedure but before disposal and 17% during disposal (Public Health England, 2014).

According to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2019) all staff working with any sharp object must be trained to a high standard in sharps management. This should involve the correct use and discarding of sharps and sharps safety procedures, and what to do in the aftermath of an injury.

When engaging with the use of sharps or potential sharps it is always good practice to have all equipment ready, be familiar with the equipment and not to rush when dealing with them. All used sharps must be disposed of instantly after use and placed directly into a sharps bin by the person who has used the item. All sharps that have a safety mechanism must be activated before disposal. When disposing of sharps into the sharp container, care must be taken to prevent the outside of the sharps container from becoming contaminated. Do not over fill sharps containers; they must be replaced when 2/3rds full, HSE (2019).

When dealing with a needle stick injury there are certain procedures that must be taken, all workplaces will have their own policies and procedures, but all should encourage the wound to

bleed, preferably by holding it under running water, whilst cleaning the wound with plenty of soap being careful not to scrub the wound. Sucking the wound is considered dangerous and is not advised. Once the area is washed, dry the wound and cover with a clean dressing. Most healthcare companies will have a procedure to contact the employer’s occupational health and attend the nearest A&E to undergo treatment if needed (NHS, 2019).

Although working with sharps can be hazardous, good education and being organised can help protect healthcare workers from potential and unnecessary injuries, which can result in stressful situations for staff involved.