



**UVa Healthcare Worker Safety Center and American Nurses Association
issue Call to Action to protect healthcare workers from exposure to
bloodborne diseases**

*19 nursing and healthcare organizations endorse statement as roadmap for future
efforts on needlestick prevention*

March 8, 2012 (Washington, DC) – In the 10 years since the passage of the federal Needlestick Safety and Protection Act, much progress has been made to reduce the risk of healthcare worker exposure to bloodborne pathogens—yet significant challenges remain. The International Healthcare Worker Safety Center at the University of Virginia and the American Nurses Association (ANA), along with colleagues across the spectrum of healthcare, have agreed on a [Consensus Statement and Call to Action](#) to address these issues.

“We view this as a roadmap for future progress in preventing needlesticks, one of the most serious occupational risks healthcare workers face,” according to Center director and UVa Professor Janine Jagger, MPH, PhD. The eight-page statement provides “a snapshot of where we are now and where further work is needed in order to continue to protect healthcare workers from this risk they face every day in the line of duty,” Jagger says.

The Call to Action focuses on five pivotal areas in need of attention:

1. Improve sharps safety in surgical settings;
2. Understand and reduce exposure risks in non-hospital settings (which include physicians’ offices, clinics, home healthcare, and an array of other settings);
3. Involve frontline workers in the selection of safety devices;
4. Address gaps in available safety devices, and encourage innovative designs and technology;
5. Enhance worker education and training.

ANA, which launched the [Safe Needles Save Lives](#) campaign in the late 1990s to advocate for national legislation, was the first nursing organization to endorse the statement. ANA represents the interests of the nation’s 3.1 million registered nurses.

“Needlestick injuries are preventable and cannot be tolerated as a cost of doing business. Healthcare organizations are charged with ensuring safety and preventing harm—to patients, employees and the public. Unfortunately, needlesticks still occur, whether from lack of education and training, complacency or frugality,” said ANA President Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN.

Daley noted that ANA is committed to enabling nurses to advocate for their own safety, through its Call to Action endorsement and its Safe Needles Save Lives initiative.

“For more than 10 years, healthcare workers have been protected from these risks to their careers and lives by the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act. Nurses need to hold employers accountable for following the law and refuse to accept anything less,” Daley said. “Progress has been made, but the law provides only a framework. It is up to *people* to create the culture of safety necessary to minimize incidents.”

Jordan Barab, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, expressed OSHA's support and noted, "The goal of this consensus statement, which is to continue the progress in reducing the risk of sharps injuries to healthcare workers, is one that is in line with OSHA's mission.”

Organizations endorsing the statement represent a wide range of nursing specialties, including surgical, infusion, medical-surgical, occupational health, neonatal, and critical care, and many different settings, such as ambulatory care and veterans affairs. Safety and educational organizations are also among the signers, along with AdvaMed, the medical device trade association.

AdvaMed is comprised of 400 member companies which together produce nearly 90 percent of the healthcare technology purchased annually in the U.S. and more than 50 percent purchased annually worldwide. “We are pleased and proud to acknowledge the role our members have played in reducing sharps injury risks to healthcare workers, by developing innovative safety-engineered technology,” commented Stephen J. Ubl, president and CEO of AdvaMed. “We must continue efforts to ensure that workers in all healthcare settings are protected.”

The idea for the Call to Action grew out of a 2010 conference organized by the Safety Center and supported by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, marking the 10-year anniversary of the federal Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act. Attended by over 100 key opinion leaders in sharps injury prevention, including clinicians, researchers, and industry and government representatives, the conference explored the impact of the federal law in reducing sharps injuries and improving the safety of healthcare workers, both in the U.S. and globally. Conference participants agreed that while significant progress has been made over the previous decade and a half in reducing this risk in the U.S., more needs to be done. The Consensus Statement delineates the ongoing issues and current challenges in the field.

The Consensus Statement notes that healthcare workers in non-hospital settings account for about 65 percent of the U.S. healthcare workforce — a proportion that will continue to grow over the next decade. While safety-engineered devices are in widespread use in most hospitals and clinical laboratories, market data show that their use in non-hospital settings lags behind. Health and Human Services agencies such as CDC/NIOSH and other government and non-governmental agencies and professional organizations need to support epidemiological research that evaluates risks to workers in a wide range of non-hospital settings, the statement says. It also urges professional organizations representing non-hospital care settings to make sharps safety a priority and ensure availability of appropriate devices and educational and training materials which are targeted for workers in these settings.

UVa Safety Center director Jagger said, “While we celebrate the progress we have made, we must acknowledge the gaps that exist. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that all healthcare workers, regardless of the setting in which they practice or the procedures they perform, are

offered the same standard of protection from sharps injuries and exposures to bloodborne pathogens.”

The statement, along with a complete list of endorsing organizations, can be viewed at the Center’s website:

http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/safetycenter/Consensus_statement_sharps_injury_prevention.pdf

Note to press: Dr. Jagger is available for interviews to discuss the Consensus Statement on Thursday, March 8 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. To schedule an interview, contact Jane Perry at 434-982-3763.

For more information, contact:

Adam Sachs
American Nurses Association
301-628-5034
adam.sachs@ana.org

Jane Perry
Assoc. Director
Intl. Healthcare Worker Safety Center
434-982-3763
janeperry@virginia.edu

List of organizations endorsing the Consensus Statement on Sharps Safety:

- Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
- Academy of Neonatal Nursing
- AdvaMed (medical device industry trade association)
- American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
- American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
- American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
- American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
- American Nurses Association
- Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare
- Association of peri-Operative Registered Nurses
- Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
- Center for Phlebotomy Education
- Infusion Nurses Society
- International Healthcare Worker Safety Center, University of Virginia
- National Association of Neonatal Nurses
- Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
- Organization for Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention
- Premier healthcare alliance
- Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses Society