

## Underreporting of Bloodborne Exposures in a Dental School Clinic

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**Objective:** Underreporting of blood exposures is well-documented in selected groups of health care workers. This study explores the rate of underreporting among students in a dental school and identifies the most common reasons cited for failure to report.

**Methods:** Students in the classes of 2007 and 2008 completed a survey at the end of the academic year in June 2007. The students were asked to indicate how many exposures they experienced and also how many they reported using the existing protocol in the 2006/2007 academic year.

In June 2008 the survey was repeated for the Class of 2008, this time with the addition of questions to help identify the reasons for the failure to report exposure incidents.

**Results:** Survey results from June 2007 indicate that the Class of 2008 students failed to report exposures 66% of the time during their junior year. The class of 2007 failed to report exposures 57% of the time during their senior year and 28% of the time during their junior year. The trend towards failure to report exposures increased as students progressed through the clinical program.

The investigators introduced a minimum of four interventions for the class of 2008 over the course of the 2007/2008 academic year, in addition to the regular infection control curriculum, to attempt to increase the reporting rate among the students. The investigators then repeated the survey with this class at the end of the academic year (June 2008) and found that underreporting decreased from 66% to 21%.

**Conclusions:** The underreporting of bloodborne exposure incidents is of concern for a number of reasons. Based on this survey and others appearing in the scientific literature, underreporting is significant among many groups of health-care workers. Continuing to identify the degree of underreporting and testing a variety of interventions may prove useful in improving exposure prevention and post exposure management strategies.