Fact Sheet:
PERCUTANEOUS INJURIES FROM SUTURE NEEDLES

- Suture needles are the main source of needlesticks to OR personnel, causing 51% of all sharps injuries in surgical settings. Scalpel blades rank a distant second, with 12% of injuries.\(^1\)

- Of the estimated 384,000 percutaneous injuries (PIs) occurring in U.S. hospitals each year,\(^2\) sharp-tip suture needles account for approximately 14% (54,000 suture needle PIs/year).\(^3\)

- The large number of injuries from suture needles increases the risk that a bloodborne pathogen, such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C, could be transmitted from a patient to a healthcare worker, or from a healthcare worker to a patient.

- If a surgeon is injured when his or her hands are in contact with the surgical site (the circumstances under which a patient can be exposed to the surgeon’s blood), data show that a suture needle is the cause of injury in 71% of cases.\(^4\)

- Follow-up for percutaneous injuries costs between $500 and $2,500 (if no infection is contracted)\(^5\), with an average of $672 reported in one study\(^6\); for the estimated 54,000 injuries caused by suture needles each year, this translates to a potential cost to U.S. hospitals of $36.3 million per year.

- A study published in the journal of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN Journal) found that “59% of suture needle injuries were caused by needles used to suture muscle or fascia, for which blunt suture needles could be substituted.”\(^1\)

- The study further found that if a 59% drop in suture needle injuries were realized, “this measure alone would result in an overall 30% drop in percutaneous injuries in the OR.”\(^1\)

References