

# OFFICE SAFETY

An effective Safety Management Program can help prevent patient or staff accidents, as well as the loss of physical property. It is important to assess your practice's physical environment on an ongoing basis, as well as encourage your staff to bring any concerns forward via staff meetings, direct report, or a suggestion box to assist in determining any safety concerns that need to be addressed.

## Medical Equipment

A patient injury from a medical device or piece of equipment may trigger a claim against both the physician practice and the equipment manufacturer. To reduce patient safety and liability risks associated with medical devices and equipment, your office should have an effective program for managing medical equipment.

Management of medical equipment in an office setting calls for the following:

- control and centralization of equipment selection and purchases
- a system for performance of periodic inspections, maintenance and repair of equipment – including emergency equipment – that is documented in either work orders or a written log
- documentation to support the practice's position that only qualified personnel who have been properly trained operate equipment
- a policy mandating the removal of defective equipment from patient care and the sequestration of equipment involved in any patient incident
- a system for reporting incidents of equipment malfunction
- a procedure to ensure that malfunctioning equipment involved in a patient incident is **not** released to the manufacturer, but is removed from service and held for testing by a third party, or until advised by Princeton Insurance
- retention of recall notices with notation of the item's serial number, to whom it was returned, and the date of the return
- posting of applicable telephone numbers in a prominent location for use by staff in an equipment emergency

## Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies in the office practice setting are not uncommon. They may range from a medical emergency to environmental occurrences such as a fire or power outage. It is important that you have an emergency response plan appropriate to the practice and that all staff are trained in what to do in an emergency.

- develop *written* emergency policies and procedures for handling both medical and non-medical emergencies in your office
- conduct and document periodic emergency response training for all staff
- ensure that at least one staff member having current basic CPR certification is present during office hours
- maintain emergency equipment that is appropriate for your practice and is in good working order, such as crash cart resuscitation equipment, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors
- store emergency equipment in an accessible location known to all staff
- call 911 if transport to an emergency department is necessary – never drive a patient

- post an emergency evacuation plan throughout the office that specifies what each member of your staff is responsible for doing
- clearly identify all exits with exit signs (preferably lighted) and make sure that all exits are maintained free and clear of obstructions
- have a plan for back-up of your computer records in the event of a power interruption

## Injection Safety

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the State of New Jersey have focused on injection safety recently. This focus will persist because both patients and healthcare practitioners continue to be exposed to disease and infection by poorly handled needles, syringes, medication vials, and IV solution bags. Per the CDC's website on the subject of injection safety (<http://www.cdc.gov/injectionsafety/>), poor practices in these areas have resulted in:

- transmission of bloodborne viruses, including hepatitis C virus to patients
- notification of thousands of patients of possible exposure to bloodborne pathogens and recommendation that they be tested for HCV, HBV, and HIV
- referral of providers to licensing boards for disciplinary action
- malpractice suits filed by patients

The CDC recommends that staff:

- never administer medications from the same syringe to more than one patient, even if the needle is changed
- do not enter a vial with a used syringe or needle

The CDC further recommends that:

- medications packaged as single-use vials never be used for more than one patient
- medications packaged as multi-use vials be assigned to a single patient whenever possible
- bags or bottles of intravenous solution not be used as a common source of supply for more than one patient
- absolute adherence to proper infection control practices be maintained during the preparation and administration of injected medications

## Infection Control Recommendations from the CDC

The CDC issues guidelines for infection control in a variety of situations. In July, 2011 they issued an updated Guide to Infection Prevention in Outpatient Settings. The guide can be found at: [http://www.premierinc.com/safety/topics/guidelines/downloads/CDC\\_standards\\_ambulatory-care-July-2011.pdf](http://www.premierinc.com/safety/topics/guidelines/downloads/CDC_standards_ambulatory-care-July-2011.pdf).

An Infection Prevention Checklist for Outpatient Settings accompanies the guide. This checklist can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/pdfs/guidelines/ambulatory-care-checklist-07-2011.pdf>.

Infection control practices are no longer considered just a facility issue, especially when it comes to practices like hand washing. Patients are being educated about the same things on the websites they frequent. Your patients may ask you why you haven't washed your hands before you examine them.

## Office Safety Manual

To assist you in developing an office safety manual, and monitoring your office's safety and security, Princeton has developed sample policies and procedures which you can use as templates for your own manual. These materials are listed below:

### *An Office Safety Manual*

- [Policy & Procedure: Defibrillators/AEDs & Crash Carts](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Electrical Safety](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Electronic Equipment & Systems Protection](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Emergency Response](#)
  - ◆ [911 Poster](#)
  - ◆ [RACE fire safety diagram](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Fire Safety](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Hazardous & Medical Waste](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Infection Control](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Investigating Events in the Office Practice](#)
  - ◆ [Event/Complaint Report](#)
  - ◆ [Instructions for Completing Event/Complaint Report](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Medical Equipment Management](#)
  - ◆ [Medical Equipment Tracking Log](#)
- [Policy & Procedure: Security Management](#)
- [Environmental Safety Self Assessment](#)
- [Infection Control Self Assessment](#)