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MEMORANDVM FOR TSgt Stoll  
4NOX1A Functional Manager

FROM: Maj DiFato

SUBJ: The Wear of Gloves for Immunizations

1. Recently we have had many questions concerning the wear of gloves while giving an immunization—required or not? The Air Force does not have a specific policy on this and I think it is best if we do not make it mandatory one way or another, instead, let's ensure everyone can speak to the issue and allow each facility to set its own policy.

2. So what is the issue? The wear of gloves for an immunization would be in order to protect the healthcare worker from potential exposure to blood. Are gloves the only way the healthcare worker can be protected? No, the healthcare worker can use a work practice, such as a "no-touch" technique in which they either use the patient to assist with the massage of the site or they fold a 2X2 gauze into four and use it to massage the site or hold pressure on any "bleeders" that occur. Remember, OSHA's intent in the bloodborne pathogen standard is that "Protective apparel is worn appropriate for the task and how that task normally goes." It is also important to remember that our goal is to teach healthcare workers to make good clinical judgment for the given situation. If they are dealing with an uncooperative patient such as a child or an adult with an altered mental status they should choose to wear gloves in that situation.

3 It is important to not gain a false sense of security with the wear of gloves, i.e. a glove will not stop a needle from penetrating skin. All needlestick exposures are considered important and should be reported; however, the needlesticks of greatest concern are those in which a needle entered a blood vessel and in which a large bore needle was used, in phlebotomy for example.

4. In the MMWR dated January 28, 1994/43 (RR01); 1-38, General Recommendations on Immunization Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), it states, "Gloves are not required when administering vaccinations, unless the persons who administer the vaccine will come into contact with potentially infectious body fluids or have open lesions on their hands "

5. I hope this offers some assistance as you evaluate this issue in your facility. The most important thing is that the healthcare worker has an understanding as to why and when the wear of protective apparel is appropriate. Surveyors will look to see what you say you do and then evaluate whether you do that. Please feel free to call me if I can be of further assistance, DSN 554-7960 or commercial (210) 292-7960.

Respectfully Submitted.

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