



**Community  
Health Network  
of San Francisco**

*The Integrated Delivery System  
of San Francisco's  
Department of Public Health*

**San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center  
Clinical Laboratory**  
1001 Potrero Avenue, NH 2M 14  
San Francisco, California 94110  
Phone: 415 206-8588  
FAX: 415 206-3045

September 2, 2010

To: Point of Care Testing Personnel

From: Clay Hooper, MS, RN, CPOCS, CNL   
Point of Care Coordinator

Eberhard Fiebig, MD   
Director, Clinical Laboratory

Elaine Dekker, BSN, RN, CIC   
Infection Control Coordinator

**Re: Fingerstick Devices to Obtain Blood Specimens: Initial Communication (from the FDA) – Risk of Transmitting Bloodborne Pathogens**

---

**Please Post Along With FDA Announcement**

This is an alert / reminder MEMO. Please see accompanying notice from the FDA titled: *Fingerstick Devices to Obtain Blood Specimens: Initial Communication – Risk of Transmitting Bloodborne Pathogens*.

It is important to review with staff the following points:

- **Lancets** used on the SFGH campus are **single use** lancets. There should **never** be multiple use attempts with these lancets. They are intended for **one use - on one patient**, then disposed of in the sharps container.
- **Laboratory Devices** used to obtain blood specimens from patients should never touch the patient or in any way become contaminated with their body substances. Only the instrument **testing strip** should contact the patient's blood. After use, the strip is to be discarded per Hospital Policy.
- **Laboratory Devices**, such as glucose meters, creatinine meters, etc. used to read results from test strips, should **never** be placed in the patient's bed or on their gurney. When setting them aside for a moment, they should only be placed on properly prepared surfaces, such as a cleaned bedside table.
- If a Laboratory Device becomes **contaminated**, follow cleaning instructions found in the Point of Care Testing Policy and Procedure for that particular device and / or follow Infection Control's Policy # 6.1. Remember: Drenching an electrical instrument is not only unnecessary but will ruin the instrument.

Please contact Point of Care Testing Services or Infection Control with any questions or concerns.



## **Fingerstick Devices to Obtain Blood Specimens: Initial Communication - Risk of Transmitting Bloodborne Pathogens**

**Reusable fingerstick (blood lancing) devices and point of care (POC) blood testing devices (e.g., blood glucose meters, PT/INR anticoagulation meters, cholesterol testing devices)**

[Posted 08/26/2010]

**AUDIENCE:** Primary Care, Nursing, Laboratory

**ISSUE:** FDA and CDC have noted a progressive increase in the reports of bloodborne infection transmission over the past 10 to 15 years (primarily hepatitis B virus), resulting from the shared use of fingerstick and point-of-care [POC] blood testing devices.

Fingerstick and POC blood testing devices used on more than one patient may not be safe for several reasons. Improper use or device malfunction can lead to the use of the contaminated lancet blade on more than one patient. It is difficult for healthcare staff to ensure that all blood has been removed from POC blood testing devices and the reusable portions of the fingerstick device. If POC blood testing devices are used on multiple patients and are not cleaned and disinfected correctly and thoroughly between each patient, contaminated blood left on them could result in bloodborne pathogen transmission among patients.

**BACKGROUND:** Fingerstick devices are instruments equipped with a lancet. These devices are used for making skin punctures to obtain small blood specimens which are tested for blood glucose, hemoglobin, and other blood components. Some fingerstick devices are packaged with POC blood testing devices, such as blood glucose meters and PT/INR anticoagulation meters, while other fingerstick devices and lancet blades are sold separately.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Fingerstick devices should never be used for more than one person. Whenever possible, POC blood testing devices, such as blood glucose meters and PT/INR anticoagulation meters, should be used only on one patient and not shared. If dedicating POC blood testing devices to a single patient is not possible, the devices should be properly cleaned and disinfected after every use as described in the device labeling.