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AOHP Releases 2013 and 2014 Results of Its National Survey on Blood Exposures Among U.S. Healthcare Workers

April 7, 2016 – The Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP) recently released results of the EXPO-S.T.O.P. (**EXPO**sure **S**urvey of **T**rends in **O**ccupational **P**ractice) 2013 and 2014 surveys in the Winter 2016 issue of the AOHP *Journal*. AOHP's EXPO-S.T.O.P. is an annual survey to ascertain the incidence of sharps injuries and mucocutaneous blood exposures among healthcare workers (HCW) in U.S. healthcare facilities. The largest survey of its kind in the United States, it was initiated in 2011 to establish a nationally representative blood exposure database and benchmark resource.

This year's EXPO-S.T.O.P. lead investigators, Carol Brown, PhD and Miranda Dally, both from the Center for Health, Work and Environment, Colorado School of Public Health, emphasized the importance of protecting HCW from blood exposures. "All blood exposures - from either punctures or splashes - are potentially infectious and pose a serious occupational risk that healthcare facilities must continue to strive to reduce," they explained.

A 16-item electronic survey pertaining to 2013 and 2014 calendar year data was distributed in early 2015 to ascertain blood exposure incidence and denominator data and provide results that help healthcare facilities enumerate and categorize blood exposures to better understand how they occur, how they can be reduced and what resources are required to achieve their reduction. The survey results also identify best practices in hospitals with low incidence rates of blood exposures.

The 2013 and 2014 sharps injury rates were respectively 33.0 per 100 occupied beds (OB), or 2.6 per 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, and 33.3 per 100 OB (2.7 per 100 FTE). According to co-author Terry Grimmond, Grimmond & Associates, New Zealand, "These rates are significantly higher than previous surveys. Simply mandating the use of safety engineered devices through the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act of 2001 has not achieved our reduction goals. A new vigor must be found to protect HCW."

AOHP is committed to reporting this information to encourage healthcare facilities across the nation to identify new methods to protect healthcare workers from blood exposures by highlighting best practices that have led to a more than 60 percent reduction in incidents in some hospitals. Strategies include:

- Prevention through education.
- Data-driven communication.
- Immediate root cause investigation of all exposures.
- Adoption of safer safety engineered devices.

- Engagement of staff on all levels.
- Acceptance by staff that safety is their responsibility.

"This rise in exposures should draw the attention of every healthcare institution," summarizes co-author Linda Good, PhD, RN, COHN-S, Director of Employee Occupational Health Services, Scripps Health, San Diego, CA. "It should also renew a commitment to work toward achieving the only acceptable bloodborne pathogen exposure rate, which is zero."

AOHP is a national association representing thousands of HCW whose vision is to be the defining resource and leading advocate for occupational health and safety in healthcare. AOHP promotes health, safety and well-being for healthcare workers through: advocating for employee health and safety; occupational health education and networking opportunities; health and safety advancement through best practice and research; and partnering with employers, regulatory agencies and related associations.

For more information, contact Annie Wiest, AOHP Executive Director, at 800-362-4347, or e-mail info@aohp.org. Copies of the Winter 2016 AOHP *Journal* article - and access to an informative webinar - reporting the EXPO-S.T.O.P. 2013 and 2014 survey results are free for members and available to non-members for \$30 by contacting info@aohp.org.

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