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| C:\Users\z9801168\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\D90HK2AH\UNSW Landscape.png | SoMS Sharps protocol |
| **Faculty/Division** | **School/Unit** |
| Medicine | Medical Sciences |
| **Document number** | **Initial issue date** | **Current version** | **Effective date** | **Next review date** |
| SoMS\_HS\_012 | 30/03/2015 | 4.0 | 29/01/2018 | 29/01/2021 |

1. **Purpose – context for development of the protocol**

This protocol is designed to provide guidance on the safe use of sharps within the School of Medical Sciences.

1. **Scope – to which positions/groups does the protocol apply**

All staff, students, visiting workers in the School of Medical Sciences

1. **Definitions and acronyms used**

Needlestick: any piercing injury from a hypodermic needle or similar.

Sharps: objects or devices having acute rigid corners, pointed edges or protuberances capable of cutting or penetrating the skin. This description includes hypodermic needles, Pasteur pipettes, scalpel blades and broken glass.

1. **Protocol statement**
	1. **Avoid the use of sharps**

In the first instance consideration must be given to alternatives to sharps e.g.

* + - Automatic puncturing/slicing instead of manual
		- Using a blunt drawing-up needle instead of a pointed needle
	+ Use gel cutting tips (that attach to a pipette) instead of blades for cutting out gets

Otherwise, consider using safer options e.g.

* + Use single-use disposable scalpels – this eliminates the risk of injury while removing the blade
	+ Use a blade removal device – this reduces the risk of injury while removing the blade
	+ Use a scalpel tray – this reduces the risk of injury from leaving a blade on the bench for re-use.

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| Drawing-up needle | Disposal scalpel with stainless steel blade  |
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| Blade remover | Blade remover – hand held |
| clip_image002 | gel cutting |
| Scalpel shield tray | Gel cutting tips |

* 1. **Handling sharps**

If you use sharps during the course of your work, follow these basic procedures for safe handling:

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| **Dos** | **Don’ts** |
| * Use single-use scalpel blades and when removing these from the handle use the automatic release lever, not your hands.
 | * Do not recap / re-sheath needles or lancets or try to break them off.
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| * Dispose of sharps immediately after use - not later
 | * Never leave sharps unattended on the bench
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| * Locate the sharps bin close to the work area.
 | * Do not walk unnecessary distances with a sharp in hand.
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| * Always take responsibility of your own sharp
 | * Do not ask for a sharp item to be taken from you or to be disposed of by someone else.
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| * Point sharps and cut away from your body
 | * Do not attempt to catch falling sharps.
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| * Double glove when using sharps
 | * Don’t work with sharps without wearing PPE
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| * Close sharps waste container once it is full
 | * Do not overfill sharps waste containers (close them when ¾ full)
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* 1. **Disposing of sharps**
* Sharps must be disposed of in a yellow **sharps container** (available from Upper Campus Stores x52007).
* Always check the bin is properly assembled, otherwise it could become undone and cause an injury.
* Place the container as close as possible to where you will be working with the sharps, on a flat stable surface.
* Gently place the sharp, point end first, into the container.
* Drop the item in rather than push.
* Do not place hands inside the container.
* Do not put liquid directly into a sharps container, they are not leak-proof.
* When ¾ full the sharps bin should be closed, and the lid locked.
* Put the bin in the nearest hazardous waste bin (yellow for biological, purple for cytotoxic).
* Do not autoclave a sharps bin.
* Sharps bins must not be used for any other purpose than for the disposal of sharps (including using half the unassembled yellow bin for storage) as this can lead to confusion and possible sharps injuries.

Broken glass

* Broken glass should be disposed of using a white 15L plastic bucket (available from Upper Campus Stores x52007).
* When the bucket is full, seal and complete the chemical hazardous waste form and inform the lab support officer that it is ready for collection.
	1. **Puncture wound injuries**

In the event of a puncture wound injury (e.g. needle stick, animal bite) immediately follow these steps:

**Step 1 – Clean / Decontaminate**

Skin:Wash thoroughly with soap and water immediately (if substantial contamination, use a safety shower)

Mouth, Nose, Eye(s):Rinse well with water or saline immediately (use eye wash facility if available)

**Step 2 – Seek emergency treatment**

Notify your local First Aid Officer and your supervisor

If there is potential exposure to hazardous substance, go to the UNSW Health Centre or report to the Casualty Department of the nearest Public Hospital or to your own medical practitioner for assessment as soon as possible **(within 2 hours if possible exposure to HIV)**. A blood sample and prophylactic treatment may be required depending upon the level exposure.

**Step 3 – Counselling / Further Information**

Contact the NSW Health Needlestick Injury Hotline for confidential advice /counselling (1800 804 823 – this is a Free 24-hour on call service). A team of experienced Clinical Nurse Consultants and Medical Officers staff this confidential expert advisory service and can also provide post-exposure expertise in the following areas:

* Risk Management
* Management strategies
* Prophylaxis information
* Counselling
* Appropriate referral

**Step 4 – Report the incident**

* Record the incident in the on-line myUNSW Hazard Reporting System.
1. **Roles and responsibilities**

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| **Workers:*** + - Follow all instruction and training provided on sharps management

**Supervisors & Lab managers:** * + - Where possible eliminate the use of sharps, or use safer alternatives
		- Provide training to new users on safe handling of sharps
		- Ensure there are sufficient sharps waste disposal bins available

**Head of School:*** To ensure that workers and supervisors are following the sharps management protocol.
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| Accountabilities |
| Responsible Officer | Peter Gunning, Head – School of Medical Sciences |
| Contact Officer | Cristan Herbert, Chairperson SoMS Level 3 HS Consultation Committee |
| Supporting Information |
| Related Documents | UNSW Hazardous Waste Disposal ProcedureHS323 Biosafety Procedure |
| Superseded Documents | SoMS\_HS\_012 (v3.1) 10/06/2015 |
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| Revision History |
| Version | Approved by | Approval date | Effective date | Sections modified |
| V4.0 | Chairperson, SoMS L3 HS Consultation Committee | 29/01/2018 | 29/01/2018 | Review, administrative updates |