I. Purpose

Sharps injuries can cause considerable anxiety because of the fear of contracting blood-borne pathogens. The risk of contracting a disease from a sharps exposure is dependent upon a number of factors, including, but not limited to: the agent itself, and the dose of the agent present. This policy describes the steps necessary for handling and for disposal of sharps in the laboratory to prevent injury.

II. Scope

This policy covers all individuals doing research-related activities with sharps on the Scott & White campus.

III. Definitions

Sharps – include used needles and syringes, razor blades, scalpels, broken glass, pipettes, pipette tips, and other used items that could cause a puncture, cut, or abrasion.

Sharps injury – wounds caused by sharps that accidentally puncture, cut, or abrade the skin.

IV. Procedures

A. Handling of Sharps

1. Needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated before disposal.
2. Procedure-specific handling and disposal of sharps must be included in the laboratories’ written Standard Operating Procedures and Laboratory Manual.
3. Broken glass is not to be picked up by hand. Mechanical aids, such as tongs, forceps, or dustpan and brush are to be used to clean up and discard broken glass.
4. Whenever possible, needle-safe systems should be substituted for typical syringe/needle components.
5. Razor blades and disposable scalpels should not be reused, but should be discarded immediately after use.
6. In certain special instances (i.e. drawing up a solution for injection from a capped multi-use vial), needles may need to be recapped. For these purposes, needles should be recapped using either the one-hand method, or by using forceps (or other such instrument) to place the cap back on the needle.

B. Discarding Disposable Sharps

1. **Do not re-cap needles for disposal.** Just place the needle into the sharps container after final use.
2. Needles, glass (test tubes, serological pipettes, Pasteur pipettes, glass slides, etc.) and disposable sharp instruments (blades, lancets, etc.) are to be disposed of in approved, rigid, puncture-resistant containers. These containers must be conveniently and widely available in all areas where there is handling of sharps.
3. Sharps containers must be placed within easy reach of work stations where sharps are generated (for example, inside biosafety cabinets while working with sharps).

4. Never fill sharps containers more than ¾ full.

5. Use a size and shape container that will allow the sharp to freely and completely enter the container.

6. Close and seal the top of containers before placing into larger biohazard containers.

7. Refer to policy #IBC.003, Biohazardous Waste Disposal, for additional information about sharps disposal.

C. Reusable Sharps

1. Reusable sharps must be placed in appropriate, puncture-resistant and leak-proof containers until they are re-processed. If feasible, containers should have an appropriate disinfectant so that decontamination can begin immediately. Containers should be marked with the biohazard label.

2. Contaminated, reusable sharps are not stored or re-processed in such a manner that would require personnel to reach into the container with their hands.

3. When procedures are done, reusable sharps should be decontaminated without delay using appropriate methods (autoclave, or disinfectant treatment).

D. Discarding disposable pipette tips and serological pipettes

1. Disposable pipette tips and serological pipettes (plastic) must be placed into a hard-walled container (approved sharps containers work well) for disposal.

2. To dispose, seal the container and place into a large biohazard bag. Seal the biohazard bag with tape and then place that bag into a second biohazard bag. Seal the second biohazard bag and prepare as normal for pickup by MedSharps.

E. Sharps injury

1. When injured with a sharps instrument, keep calm.

2. Encourage the wound to bleed by gently squeezing in the wound area.

3. Wash the injured area with soap and water for 15 minutes.

4. Contact Employee Health Services and seek medical treatment and evaluation for potential exposure(s) (during working hours). After hours, report to the Scott & White Emergency Room for treatment and evaluation.

5. Report the injury to your supervisor and to the Biosafety Office.