SHEA Newsletter

Edited by Robert A. Weinstein, MD

The Society of Hospital Epidemiologists of America

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SHEA Cosponsors National Forum on AIDS/Hepatitis B

America's healthcare leaders will meet in Washington, DC, in November to discuss AIDS and hepatitis B, two bloodborne diseases of importance to hospitals and healthcare workers.

The meeting, expected to attract more than 1,000 experts from government, academia and industry, is the 4th National Forum on AIDS and Hepatitis B and will be November 19-21 at The Washington Hilton. The meeting will examine strategies by hospitals, laboratories and healthcare professionals for controlling the spread of these bloodborne diseases in and from the workplace.

SHEA is one of 5 1 health-related organizations cosponsoring the forum. The meeting is being organized by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Among top officials and educators who will participate in the meeting are Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan, MI); Assistant Secretary for Health James 0. Mason, MD, DrPH; Food and Drug Commissioner Frank E. Young, M D ; Congressman Ralph Regula (R-OH); Chief of Staff to the Senate Minority Leader Sheila Burke, RN; and Dean of the University of Michigan School of Public Health June E. Osborn, MD.

Some of the topics to be covered during the two-day forum include the economics of' bloodborne diseases; new medical technologies for AIDS and hepatitis B; international approaches to controlling viral hepatitis; managing the disposal of medical and infectious waste; and ensuring the safety of the nation's blood supply. There will also be structured workshops discussing policies, programs, resources and barriers related to existing and proposed initiatives.

The forum will include exhibits of new products used to screen and diagnose bloodborne pathogens, diagnostic kits and materials handling equipment. There will also be a display of publications and program materials used to educate people about AIDS and hepatitis B.

CME credits will be available. The preregistration fee is $250; on-site registration fee is $295.

For more information or a copy of the program, contact NFID at 4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 750, Bethesda, MD 20814, or call (301) 656-0003.

Liaison Report

Dr. Murray Batt reports that the Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), published 96 pages of "Proposed Rules for Occupational Exposure to Blood Borne Pathogens" in the May 30, 1989 Federal Kegister. Written comments were solicited only through August 14, 1989.

Regardless of the initiating reason for any of its current inspections at healthcare Facilities, OSHA is already assessing compliance with "Universal Precautions According to OSHA" and is giving citations and fines for non-compliance.

OSHA's approach focuses on the employer's obligation to protect its employees. The rulemaking covers a wide variety of venues for occupational exposure to blood and other potentially infectious material, including HIV research laboratories, physicians' and dentists' offices, hospitals, nursing homes, law enforcement, corrections and fire fighting departments. The final rule likely will closely resemble the proposed rules.

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