Ethics on Demand – Contaminated Needle

**Article:** [**Contaminated needle used to draw blood from child at St. Catharines hospital**](https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/news-story/9230279-contaminated-needle-used-to-draw-blood-from-child-at-st-catharines-hospital/)

**What was the situation?**

A personal support worker, assisting a nurse with a blood draw on a two-year-old boy in a hospital emergency room, pricked her finger with the needle. Contrary to hospital policy, the personal support work passed the needle back to the nurse to hold. The nurse then used the contaminated need to draw blood from the child. The child’s mother and nurse were not aware that the personal support worker had pricked herself with the needle. The personal support worker files an incident report after the blood was drawn. It took 48 hours for the report to be processed and for the family to be notified.

**What went wrong?**

Lack of professional responsibility Disregard of safe practices No accountability

**Using the Code of Ethics**

The [CSMLS Code of Ethics](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Ethics.aspx) serves to define and expand the inherent ethical concepts contained in the [CSMLS Code of Professional Conduct](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Conduct.aspx), to document expectations of ethical behaviour for all medical laboratory professionals, and to provide a framework during professional and personal self-evaluation. Consider how adhering to these codes could have prevented the situation. What other codes are applicable?

*Code of Ethics*

* 1.3 Recognize risk prone situations in order to minimize harm to patients, staff and self.
* 1.4 Utilize professional and institutional mechanisms to intervene when witness to unsafe, incompetent or unethical practices.
* 1.5 Assume responsibility for errors one has committed or observed and take immediate action to prevent or minimize associated harm.
* 4.1 Be responsible first to the patient, then to society and the environment for safe and lawful practice and the sustainable use of resources.

*Code of Professional Conduct*

* Medical laboratory professionals shall take responsibility for their professional acts.
* Medical laboratory professionals shall practise safe work procedures at all times to ensure the safety of patients and co-workers and the protection of the environment.

**Relevant Articles**

[Workers may have been exposed to Ebola, HIV and TB at Winnipeg lab, reports reveal](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/iteam/microbiology-lab-winnipeg-ebola-hiv-tb-1.3962515)

[New developments in case of nurse who allegedly exposed patients to hepatitis C](https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/hospital-sued-nurse-allegedly-exposed-patients-hepatitis-c-171411119.html)

[My medical outlook changed after I jabbed my finger with a needle](https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2017/sep/07/medical-outlook-changed-jabbed-finger-needle)