At Least 31 Patients Contracted Hepatitis C
New Hampshire, USA
August 2012

Testing is still ongoing, but at least 31 people have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated syringes at a New Hampshire cardiac catheterization lab.

Investigators are continuing to work to understand the issues involved, but two new significant pieces of information should be added to the Cause Map.

The source of the hepatitis C has been determined by investigators. Investigators found that a medical technician with hepatitis C contaminated syringes that were then used on patients. The medical technician is a drug addict who used the syringes because they were filled with Fentanyl, an anesthetic far more powerful than morphine. Hepatitis C is spread through blood to blood contact so syringes contained with hepatitis C are a major health hazard that are capable of spreading the disease. The syringes were not secured so he was able to attain them. He then used them, refilled them with saline or another liquid and replaced them without any other member of the staff noticing.

Investigators have learned that the medical technician responsible for the contamination has worked in 18 hospitals in seven other states during the last 10 years. It’s not known when the medical technician contracted hepatitis C, but investigators believe he had a positive test for hepatitis C in June 2010. This means that the investigation needs to be expanded and that many more people may need to be tested.

"Its reach is unprecedented, and we're the tip of the spear in the investigation. In terms of volume, scope and intensity of work involved, it's a mammoth effort"

- John P. Kacavas, the United States attorney for New Hampshire

Possible Solutions:
- Keep filled syringes in secure location.
- Fentanyl syringes were not saturated.
- Syringes filled with Fentanyl, a powerful anesthetic.
- Medical tech was a drug addict.
- Medical tech refilled and replaced syringes.
- Attempt to cover theft of drugs.

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