“Most of the sharps exposures occur in the operating rooms and peri-anesthesia areas”. At our institution, this was an oft-quoted statement, but an unsupported one. When Rebecca Ogden, Nurse Manager of the Same Day Surgery Center was charged with improving Sharps safety, she assigned a team to investigate the veracity of this statement.

Upon reviewing the data gathered by the Employee Health Department, we found that, indeed, 38% of sharps exposures at UC Davis Medical Center occurred in the peri-operative areas and operating rooms. To investigate further, the data was broken down by job description (MDs, RNs, scrub techs, and medical students).

We found that MDs had 68% of the sharps exposures; RNs had 17%, scrub techs 7%, and medical students 8%. This data was then broken down by exposure type (suture needle, hollow bore needle, scalpel, splash, and “other”). The “other” category included sharps exposures involving bovie tips, staples, skin and bone hooks, drill bits, screws, bone fragments, etc.

Large copies of the CDC’s “Sharps Safety Poster” were used and these were modified to include the data from UCDavis’ Employee Health Department in order to make the poster specific to our institution. The Posters have been prominently displayed in hallways frequented by staff in the Main Operating Pavilions, the Children’s Surgery Center, and the Same Day Surgery Center.

The Posters were put up in October, 2010. Follow-up analysis of sharps exposures will be conducted by Employee Health to determine if the Poster information has improved awareness of Sharps Safety.