Research SWAT Team

Evaluating Research Injuries & Exposures

Reflecting on a particularly dangerous exposure, which occurred in a laboratory in 2008, the Research Safety Committee saw an opportunity to improve the process of investigating and tracking real and potential hazardous exposures and injuries in the research labs. In the past, similar efforts were often not unified, resulting in inconsistent data collection, insufficient tracking & trending, and compliance gaps with reporting. Additionally, no "research specific" mechanisms existed for these purposes. In short, we needed a collaborative team and a streamlined process.

Objectives

- Create a "Research SWAT" team, pulling from key stakeholder departments;
- Establish a unified system for evaluating research incidents and injury trends;
- Dovetail with SPIRIT Log and hospital-wide employee safety initiatives;
- Consistently identify root cause(s), trends, and areas for improvement;
- Improve compliance with timely reporting to local, state, and federal agencies.

The Research SWAT Team

Dieter Affeln, MD; Director of Medical Management, Employee Occupational Health Services (EOHS)
Linda Angelbeck; IACUC Administrator, Research & Academic Affairs (R&AA)
Dan Dancause; Chemical Hygiene Officer, Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S)
Will Decaneas; Administrative Manager, Research Operations
Mary Ellen DeTeso, RN; Case Manager, EOHS
Anastacia Feldman; Research Compliance Officer, Office / Business Conduct
Andi Hernandez; Administrative Director, Research Operations
Mary Kelly, RN; Occupational Health Nurse, EOHS
Birgit Korioth-Schmitz, MD; Staff Scientist, Division of Viral Pathogenesis
Gary Schweon, RN; Director, EH&S
Susanne Simon, MS; BioSafety Officer, EH&S

Achievements

- Standardized investigation process flow, timelines, & reporting mechanism;
- Established statistical tracking program & identified trends over **31 incidents evaluated during 2009**;
- Added / improved training on prevalent research injury types for research staff;
- Implemented over 5 significant safety measures within the Research Enterprise;
- Assisted in improving efficiency of emergency treatment for relevant injuries.

The Process

When an injury involving hazardous materials is reported to Employee Occupational Health Services, the following process is initiated:

Action	Day
EOHS to activate **SWAT Team** via email and include copy of EOHS incident report.	1
R&AA to verify information regarding employee supervisor/manager, lab etc.	1
Office of Business Conduct (OBC) to review incident & assess if reportable to local, state, and federal agencies, as well as determine applicable timelines.. **OBC** works with manager/supervisor to complete any reporting within required timeline.	1
EH&S to complete initial investigation and preliminary recommendations. **EH&S** sends completed report to **SWAT Team** for initial review.	2-3
SWAT Team reviews and responds to **R&AA** with comments/recommendations.	4
R&AA sends report to **Supervisor/Manager** to complete actions including responsible party and timeline for completion. Supervisor/manager submits back to **R&AA.**	7
R&AA reviews report, verifies action items and responsible parties. Resends out to **SWAT Team**. Team to meet and review (optional).	8
R&AA sets up documentation file including tracking of any other notifications, others participating in investigation etc. **R&AA** to present to **Research Safety Committee** (RSC) planning group for discussion and presenting to monthly **RSC**.	1-8+

Lessons Learned

- Established baseline data for frequency & types of incidents - can be trended year-over-year;
- Harvard Committee on Microbiological Safety commended BIDMC on our reporting program and effective communication;
- The standardized procedure increased efficiency, saving time for investigators & providing improved feedback to impacted lab staff;
- Increased Compliance with both internal & external injury reporting;
- Process has provided valuable case studies for Lab Safety Officer program.

Moving Forward

- Continue tracking & trending events;
- Identify and target new safety equipment & procedures;
- Continually improve the safety of the research work environment;
- Share results with other Longwood Institutions – set new reporting standards and benchmarks.

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