

**BULLETIN**

**from the**

**Primary Care and Ocular Disease Committee  
Clinical Care Center**

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**SUBJ:** OSHA's Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Rule

**TO:** Affiliated/Allied/Regional Association Presidents and Executive Directors, Administrative Heads of Schools and Colleges of Optometry, RALs, O, T, ED, Center Chairs and Directors, Section Chairs and Managers, GC, Primary Care and Ocular Disease Committee, Patient Care & Management Committee, ILAMO, WO Library, NE, JAOA-E, OE-E

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued a final rule on Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens effective March 6, 1992. This new rule is directed at protecting health care workers who may be exposed to blood and other potentially infectious materials. Although the regulation is directed largely at hospitals and medical and dental practices, it does apply to all licensed health care professionals. As employers, optometrists are required to ensure that any of their employees who may be at risk for exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials are appropriately protected and that the requirements of the rule are followed.

Each employer having an employee(s) with occupational exposure shall establish a written "Exposure Control Plan" designed to eliminate or minimize employee exposure. As defined by the rule, occupational exposure means reasonably anticipated skin, eye, mucous membrane or parenteral contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials that may result from the performance of an employee's duties.

Employees in optometric practices generally face little risk of occupational exposure. However, optometrists and their staff should be familiar with universal precautions to prevent contact with blood and other potentially infectious materials as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and the specific provisions of this rule. The AOA Primary Care and Ocular Disease Committee is developing a report on Infection Control Guidelines for Optometric Practices which it plans to make available later this year.

A review of the provisions of the Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens rule is attached to this bulletin along with a copy of the OSHA standard from the Federal Register, Vol. 58, No. 235, Friday, Dec. 6, 1991.