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,