

# Essentials of safe phlebotomy

What should hospital staff know to ensure sound phlebotomy practices? Here are some of Dennis Ernst's suggestions. "If everybody knew these things, then they would be effectively immunized from ever having to deal with phlebotomy-related injuries and litigation," he says.

- \* Insertion of the needle at a low angle—less than 30 degrees.
- \* Knowledge of the limits to needle relocation.
- \* Performance of a two-point check for bleeding.
- \* Drawing from less risky veins whenever possible.
- \* Adherence to proper patient identification procedures.
- \* Readiness to respond in the event the patient faints.
- \* Termination of procedure upon shooting pain.
- \* Labeling of specimens at the patient's bedside.
- \* Regular and effective evaluations of personnel.

Detailed standards appear in the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute's sixth edition of its document, "Procedures for the Collection of Diagnostic Blood Specimens by Venipuncture," published in 2007. —*Anne Paxton*