Hospital Drug Thefts Prompt HIV and Hepatitis Testing in Colorado and Arizona

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Almost 3,000 surgery patients treated at a Colorado hospital may have been exposed to HIV, hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) after a possible drug diversion by an employee at the facility, ABC 15 reports. State health officials in Arizona are also now offering free testing for blood-borne diseases after discovering that the same individual worked at two other hospitals in the Phoenix area.

Colorado police and administrators at Banner Thunderbird Medical Center in Glendale are investigating allegations that Robert “Rocky” Allen, 28, a former surgical technician, stole injection pain medications intended for patients, potentially exposing them to the viruses. The Glendale hospital is now moving toward establishing a free testing program for all surgical patients who were treated at the time of his employment.

Two hospitals near Phoenix are also offering free hepatitis and HIV testing after learning that Allen was also employed at the John C. Lincoln Medical Center for less than two months. So far, health authorities have identified 97 patients who may have been put at risk, but say the risk for any infection is very low.

According to Arizona state regulatory records, Allen had his surgical technologist license suspended in January after authorities alleged they discovered evidence that he was stealing fentanyl syringes from the surgery room, switching them with other syringes and using the powerful opioid narcotic.

So far, authorities in both states have found no cases where a patient was infected.

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