

# Business and ethics of becton dickinson and the safety syringe controversy author...

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Becton Dickinson has been in the middle of the controversy regarding the manufacturing, sale, and monopoly of safety syringes used by hospitals, clinics, and doctor and dentist offices. When the epidemic of AIDS and other lethal and infectious diseases spread across the nation, healthcare workers were still using a conceptualization of the original type of syringe created over 150 years ago. The healthcare workers realized that they were no longer safe and fought to get safer standards and equipment for use in the workplace. By 1998, the federal patent office has given patents to over 1000 designs for safety syringes. However, only a few were on the market and their initial cost was exorbitant. Even with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) enactment of the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard in 1991, and the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act, little has been truly done to protect the healthcare workers.

A prime example was in 2002 when it was approximated that 1600 healthcare workers could contract HIV through needle sticks in that year, with a rough estimate cost of \$255,000 for the direct and indirect costs associated with that one needle stick. The fact that Becton Dickinson purchased a number of the patents for safer syringes, they only offered one size when they finally started to manufacture the syringe. The 3cc was fine for a few tasks in hospitals and clinics, but the 5cc and 10cc were used more often. Becton Dickinson did not offer the shielded syringes in this size, and by buying patents and negotiating with medical supply companies they did not need to make any other size.

They continued to sell their original syringes. These actions defined by the utilitarian approach shows that the company was doing what was good for the company. In essence, Becton Dickinson was basing their decisions on the corporate population rather than the public. After court battles and settlements the Becton Dickinson Company has finally begun to manufacture all types of safety syringes. While they are not recommended, they are made and sold. The fact is that while Becton Dickinson was fighting to keep the new safety syringes from the public, Retractable Technologies, Inc created a better and safer syringe with top recommendations for safety and ease of use. If Becton Dickinson would have acted ethically and manufactured and researched safety syringes, they would be at the top of the industry.

## Reference

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