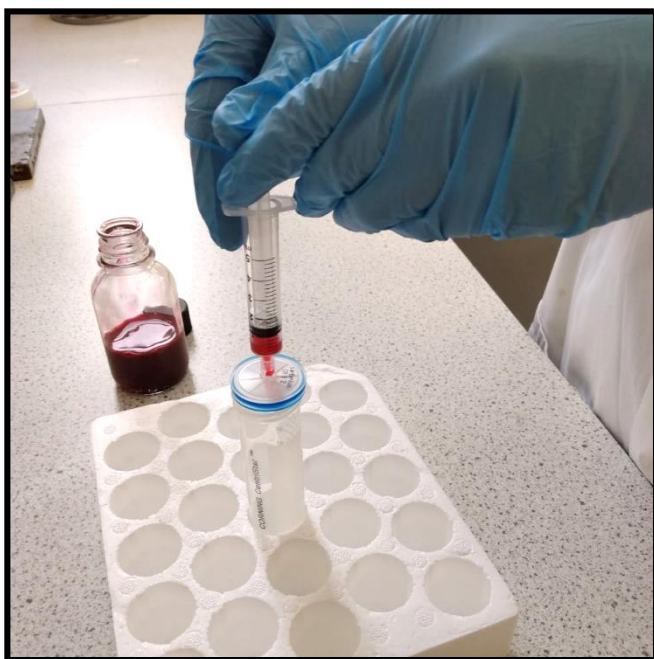


Safety Alert

Researcher Sprayed with Chemicals

24 October 2019



Description

A researcher was introducing a mixture and aluminium sulphate into a 50ml conical tube from a filtered syringe. During the process the filter suddenly separated from the syringe causing the dye to spray out onto their face and lab coat. Aluminium sulphate can cause serious eye damage and the researcher was extremely fortunate that none of the liquid came into contact with their eyes. A CoSHH assessment had been carried out for the procedure which clearly specified that eye protection should be worn but as the use of safety glasses was not normal practice in the lab this was overlooked and no eye protection was worn at the time of the accident.

Discussion

- This incident could have had serious consequences and could easily have injured both the person carrying out the procedure and anyone else in the vicinity. Syringe filters are easily blocked and when pressure is applied the contents can be sprayed out with some force in all directions therefore caution is required.
- A CoSHH assessment for the procedure was available but the researcher was not fully familiar with all of the safety precautions highlighted and was not wearing all of the required PPE in particular safety glasses when working with hazardous chemicals on the bench.

Learning Points

- Even though eye protection is not worn routinely in some laboratories it should always be easily available to staff and students and should be worn when handling certain chemicals or when highlighted in the risk assessment. In some cases using a suitable shield (e.g. a correctly positioned fume cupboard sash) can suffice.
- This incident highlights the importance of reading (and following) the risk assessment before carrying out a procedure and ensuring that staff carrying out procedures and anyone around them is protected.