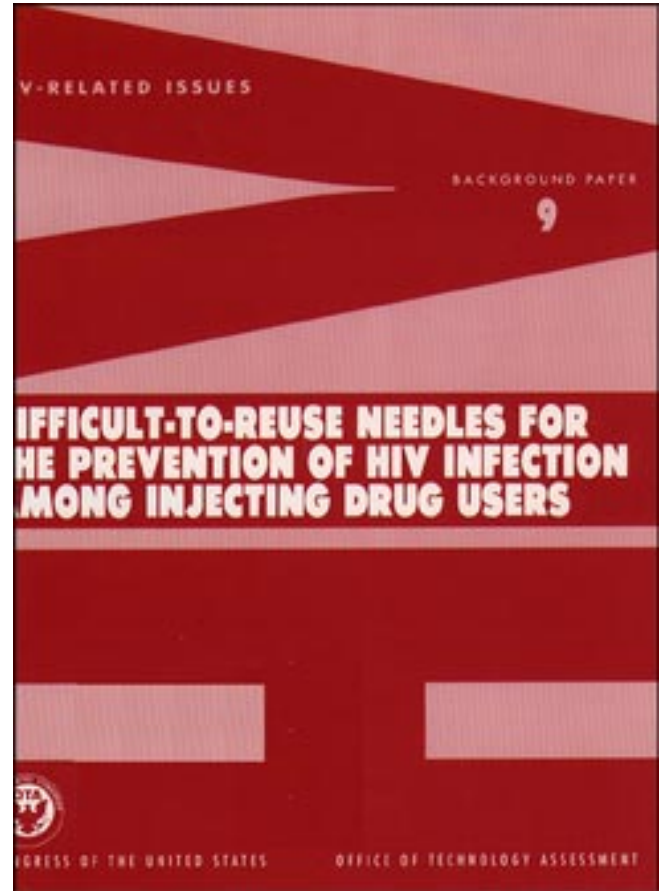


*Difficult-To-Reuse Needles for the
Prevention of HIV Infection Among Injecting
Drug Abusers*

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Foreword

Substance abuse places a significant burden on both our Nation's citizens and our economy. The high incidence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) among injecting drug users through the sharing of needles compound this problem. One-third of all cases of HIV are directly or indirectly linked to needle sharing at a cost to Federal taxpayers in excess of \$1 billion during 1992 alone. To reduce the spread of HIV among injecting drug users, their children, and their sexual partners, some health experts including C. Everett Koop, the former Surgeon General of the United States, have proposed altering the design of needles and syringes so they are difficult or impossible to reuse.

This study was conducted in response to a request by the Subcommittee on Regulation, Business Opportunities, and Energy of the House Committee on Small Business. We evaluate the likelihood that a redesign of injection equipment would actually reduce HIV infections. We also examine the proposal's feasibility and some of its implications for the use of needles and syringes within the health care system.

This background paper is the ninth in OTA's series of studies on HIV-related issues. The preceding papers in this series were: *Do Insects Transmit AIDS?* (9/87); *AIDS and Health Insurance--An OTA Survey* (2/88); *How Effective Is AIDS Education?* (6/88); *The Impact of AIDS on the Kaiser Permanence Medical Care Program (Northern California Region)* (7/88); *How Has Federal Research on AIDS/HIV Disease Contributed to Other Fields?* (4/90); *The Effectiveness of Drug Abuse Treatment: Implications for Controlling AIDS/HIV Infection* (9/90); *HIV in the Health Care Workplace* (11/91); and *The CDC'S Definition of AIDS: Implications of the Proposed Revisions* (8/92). Previous OTA reports addressing AIDS-related issues include: *Blood Policy and Technology* (1/85); *Review of the Public Health Service's Response to AIDS* (technical memorandum, 2/85); *The Cost of AIDS and Other HIV Infections: Review of the Estimates* (staff paper, 5/87); *Medical Testing and Health Insurance* (8/88); and *Adolescent Health* (11/91).

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JOHN H. GIBBONS
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Difficult-to-Reuse Needles and Syringes for the Prevention of HIV Infection Among Injecting Drug Users

Background Paper

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This background paper was prepared as part of OTA's
ongoing HIV-related assessment.

Glossary of Abbreviations

DTR -difficult to reuse

AIDS —acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

HIV —human immunodeficiency virus

WHO —World Health Organization