

Barton employs device to help needle-shy patients



Nurse Ken Harvey is a believer in Buzzy helping needle-phobic patients. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

For those who fear needles, there is no such thing as a simple little pin prick. It may end in a fainting episode which can ruin the rest of the day – where sleep is the only remedy to return to normal.

Health officials estimate at least 10 percent of the population has some form of needle phobia, also known as beonephobia. It was in 1997 that the phobia was recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

For those with extreme fear of needles it might mean avoiding

getting the flu shot, other vaccinations or even having routine blood work done. It might also mean keeping one's child away from needles as well.

"You need to make the first experience a non-painful experience," said Ken Harvey, a registered nurse in the radiology department at Barton Memorial Hospital. "You should use a distraction the first time."

If it's a bad first experience, it's possible the child will have issues as an adult where anxiety and apprehension are the norm around needles.

Barton this year started to use Buzzys as a way to distract patients from what is going on. They are clinically tested devices that have been around for a handful of years.

According to the Buzzy website, studies show the device reduces pain 56 to 88 percent of the time. They are battery operated and reusable after being cleaned.

"We put Buzzy between the brain and the pain," Harvey told *Lake Tahoe News*. It's placed a few centimeters higher than the insertion point.

In the short time Harvey been using it on patients – and he has only had adult patients – it has worked "extremely well" at least 90 percent of the time.

The concept is rather simple. The black and yellow device is designed to look like a bumble bee and then has a gentle buzzing sound, which is the vibration part of the device. The tiny blue ice pack resembles wings, and acts to numb the area. (There are Buzzys that look like lady bugs, too.)

The vibration stimulates the nerves, sending impulses to the brain. The end result is the patient is distracted, remains calm and is able to receive the injection without negative consequences.

Barton has seen such success with the Buzzys that more are being ordered for its various offices.