



Policy on Prevention of Occupational Hazards

Some facilities have a disproportionately high percentage of patients who are infected with contagious viruses, including but not limited to hepatitis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

The risk of conversion is about 1 in 200 from parenteral exposure, and the overall risk to healthcare workers of acquiring an infection in the routine performance of duties is quite low. To prevent contraction, all students should be vaccinated for Hepatitis B or should verify that they are otherwise immune. Whenever an exposure incident occurs, students should document any symptoms during the seroconversion period following the incident and seek medical attention as appropriate.

It is impossible to predict which patients are positive for such viruses and, therefore, universal precautions should be practiced at all times in all hospitals and clinics.

Precautions include:

- Always wear gloves and protective eyewear when dealing with patients in any location, including the operating room.
- Use needle-less techniques whenever possible.
- Dispose of all sharp instruments immediately in the appropriate containers.
- Waterproof gowns should be worn when there is a high risk for splashing or contamination from the operative site.

If a student experiences a clinically significant exposure to a patient's bodily fluid, he or she should follow the protocol established for that location, which should be displayed on the walls or made available by the location supervisor. Additional precautions include:

1. Washing the area with soap, bleach, or alcohol.
2. Encouraging bleeding.
3. If the patient is anesthetized and cannot give consent to be tested for a contagious virus, a blood sample should be withdrawn and sent to the lab to be held. Consent should be obtained from the patient later for testing. If that is still not possible, contact Employee Health Services who will in turn get permission from the County Health Officer.
4. Contacting the employee health center or nurse within hours of the exposure so that appropriate testing can be carried out.

Clinically significant exposure incidents include but are not limited to needle-stick and splashing into mucous membranes or through an open wound on the skin. Such incidents do not include contact of a patient's blood or saliva with intact skin.

Students, faculty, and staff will be expected to care for infected patients as they would any patient suffering from other potentially communicable diseases in accordance with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and existing hospital policies.

Students, faculty, and staff that are infected will be handled according to the policies that dictate any other medical problem, and any restrictions on activities will be based on the advice of that individual's physician and guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.