

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
FACULTY OF MEDICINE
Infectious Diseases Policy

Clinical experience is associated with a small risk of infection for all medical students. Unless medically contraindicated, students should be at all times up-to-date with immunisations against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox, Hepatitis A and B, meningococcus and influenza. Students for whom immunisation is inadvisable on medical grounds should seek advice about alternative preventive measures in the event of exposure. In addition, other infectious diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis C and Tuberculosis pose specific risks to health care workers; students should be aware of their own current status with respect to these infections and, if necessary, undergo appropriate immunisation.

In addition to the personal risks to students there are small risks to susceptible patients from actively infected students.

Accordingly, the Faculty of Medicine expects that all medical students will be aware of their own infectious diseases status. Students who consider themselves at risk should seek advice individually and check their status as often as advised. Students should consult their own medical practitioner or other medical adviser; alternatively, within the University, its clinical schools and teaching hospitals there are medically qualified staff with appropriate expertise who have agreed to be available to offer confidential advice

All students are expected to be aware of the NSW Health Department's definition of *exposure prone procedures*. Students with an infectious disease such as HIV, HBV or HCV must refrain from undertaking such procedures. No reason need be given for declining to participate in *exposure prone procedures*. Students should note that other infections may pose similar risks. The New South Wales Health Department requires that students comply with the provisions of its Occupational Screening And Vaccination Against Infectious Diseases circular (NSW Health Department Circular No. 2003/91*) and obtain, at their own cost, a documented screening and vaccination history consistent with the provisions of this Circular, which must be made available to the Health Service prior to the commencement of their clinical placement.

Copies of current NSW Health Department policy and of NSW Medical Board policy will be given to students enrolling in first year. Students may obtain additional copies at other times by applying to the Faculty Office.

Complying with this policy will not of itself prevent students with an infectious disease from completing a course that is part of their medical studies or from qualifying for the award of the degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

As students on overseas electives may be exposed to other infectious diseases, such students should seek special advice concerning the specific geographic requirements for the area to be visited at least three (3) months in advance.

Matters relating to infectious diseases are constantly under review and Faculty policy may be amended as the policies of the NH&MRC, the NSW Health Department and/or other relevant government bodies change.

Further information is also available from the University Health Service website at:
<http://www.unihealth.usyd.edu.au/>

February 2004

*Available at: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/PD/2005/PD2005_338.html

POLICY ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE ON 9 MAY 1996 AND AMENDED ON 18 DECEMBER 2000 AND ON 21 NOVEMBER 2002

Dear Student

Faculty of Medicine Policy on Infectious Diseases

Please find enclosed a copy of the Faculty's Policy on Infectious Diseases, and the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Infectious Diseases Policy.

Exposure prone procedures (EPPs) are defined in Circular 2003/91 as:

“Those procedures characterised by the potential for contact between the skin (usually finger or thumb) of the employee and sharp surgical instruments, needles or sharp tissues (splinters/pieces of bone or teeth) in body cavities or in poorly visualised or confined body sites (including the mouth).

Provided they are not conducted in poorly visualised or confined body sites, the following procedures are NOT considered to be exposure prone – oral, vaginal or rectal examinations that do not involve sharp instruments; phlebotomy; administering intramuscular, intradermal or subcutaneous injections; needle biopsies or aspirations; lumbar punctures; venous cutdown and angiographic procedures; excision of epidermal or dermal lesions; suturing of superficial skin lacerations; endoscopy; placing and maintaining peripheral and central intravascular lines, nasogastric tubes, rectal tubes and urinary catheters; acupuncture; other procedures that do not involve sharps; or procedures where the use of sharps is superficial, well visualised, and administered to compliant or anaesthetised patients, where it is very unlikely that an employee’s skin injury would result in exposure of a patient to the employee’s blood or body substance.”

The Faculty expects that students and staff will adhere to this Policy. Student confidentiality will be respected if a student declines to participate in an exposure prone procedure. It is also expected that students will act responsibly and not use this Policy simply as an excuse to avoid clinical involvement. The Faculty expects students to be aware of their own infectious disease status and to act appropriately.

If you have any concerns or questions about this Policy please contact Mr Tom Rubin, Faculty Executive Officer (61-2 9351 3057 or tom@med.usyd.edu.au). If you have concerns about your own disease status, the Faculty recommends that you contact your own doctor or one of the University's medically qualified staff with appropriate expertise. You may, of course, also contact the University Health Service.

You must recognise that individuals with certain infections may encounter difficulties in obtaining professional registration and that policies of the NSW Health Department and other relevant Government bodies may change at any time. University policy is to assist affected students to transfer to other courses should they so wish. Application for such transfer should be lodged in confidence directly with the Dean.

Sincerely

Professor Andrew Coats
Dean

June 2005

Guidelines for the implementation of the Infectious Diseases Policy of the Faculty of Medicine

1. Before entering clinical work students are expected to have ascertained their infectious status for relevant infectious diseases (as in the NSW Health Department of Health Circulars).
2. Any student who does not have a recent (within 12 months) test of his/her immune status should decline to take part in an exposure prone procedure.
3. Any student who declines to take part in an exposure prone procedure must be allowed to do so without any questioning.

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4. Students must not be subjected to comment with respect to their decision not to take part in such exposure prone procedures.
5. Students who receive a "sharps" injury in a clinical situation should seek appropriate management through their immediate supervisor without delay (less than 4 hours). Supervisors are expected to know the appropriate access arrangements for their locality.

6. Students or staff may contact for further advice or queries:-

University Campus

Professor Y Cossart

Dr John Hall

Northern Clinical School

Professor M J Field

Dr G Kotsiou

Dr P Piggott

Canberra Clinical School

Dr A Watson

Central Clinical School

Concord Hospital

Professor S B Freedman

Dr Tom Gottlieb

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

Professor W Britton

Dr R Garsia

Western Clinical School

Westmead Hospital

Dr Jon Iredell

Dr Don Packham

Nepean Hospital

Dr J Branley

General Practice

Professor M Kidd

June 2005