

Student Immunisation and Infection Risk Policy

1. All students entering programs that offer training as health care workers or researchers in which they will have contact with patients in a clinical or medical environment must take responsibility for the prevention of transmission of infectious diseases to either themselves or the public. Students must be able to apply '**standard precautions**' in their clinical and laboratory activities from early on in their training and will be provided with comprehensive information that covers:
 - (i) the significance for students of infectious disease risks throughout their course and in their professional working lives;
 - (ii) broad infection control procedures with which they must become familiar;
 - (iii) Faculty procedures regarding student immunisation, testing and follow-up requirements. (See **Immunisation and Infection Risk Management Plan.**)
2. All students in these programs will be requested to make an appointment with a medical practitioner prior to, or soon after, their placements with external clinical organisations begin.

This consultation will:

- (i) review and update his/her immunisation status (see Victorian Dept of Human Services Guidelines of October 2007) including arranging of Mantoux or QuantiFERON TB Gold testing and follow up and testing for HIV, Hep A, B and C;
- (ii) discuss blood-borne viruses that may be transmitted in the course of normal duties between health care workers and patients and follow through with appropriate testing;
- (iii) discuss the implications for the student and subsequently as a Health Care Worker, should he/she be a carrier of a particular blood-borne virus;
- (iv) discuss any risk factors he/she might have for blood-borne viral infections outside of normal student duties, and how these risks may be minimised.

For students attending the Clayton campus, the faculty **highly** recommends students make use of the group of practitioners in the Monash University Health Service for this purpose as they are familiar with the Faculty's requirements in relation to this policy and are able to provide students with all immunisations on site. They are located in the Clayton campus centre.

See: <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/community-services/health/clayton/index.html>

Students at Peninsula and Gippsland campuses are to follow course specific instructions regarding their immunisation appointments

If students wish, they may involve a medical practitioner of their choice in the consultation and immunisation process. In this situation, the practitioner must have a full understanding of the faculty policy and its implications in relation to individual student's training and his/her subsequent careers. To ensure this, the student must:

- Collect written information from the faculty about the requirements of the consultation to take to the practitioner;
- Take a faculty 'Confirmation of Consultation' form for him/her to sign on completion of the visit/tests stating that the student been seen for this purpose and been provided with a vaccination statement/card containing his/her vaccination history and status.

- Ensure that the 'Confirmation of Consultation' form is forwarded to the relevant course administrator/campus nurse.

If students have not previously been vaccinated with BCG for TB, they may need to ascertain whether the medical practitioner is accredited to perform Tuberculin Skin Testing (Mantoux Test) as this is an essential part of the process. If not, a blood test can be performed.

Information relating to Immunisation for Health Care Workers can be found at:
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/downloads/immguidelineshcw.pdf>

Students will not be permitted to use the services of a relative for this consultation.

3. Infection status and clinical exposure during training

(No student will be excluded from the course on the basis of infection status)

- i) The faculty expects each student to understand that at all times they have a duty of care to minimise the risk of spreading infectious or blood-borne diseases to patients. The faculty therefore expects that all students will make themselves aware of their infection status through the consultative process recommended previously and take appropriate action. It is guided by a range of policies (eg the Victorian government's guidelines for health care workers and the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria's 'Medical Practitioners and Medical Students Infected with Blood Borne Infectious Diseases' policy).
- ii) Policy on Students Carrying Blood-borne Diseases
 It is possible that students may enter their course carrying, or acquire during their studies, blood-borne diseases. Such students have a responsibility to acknowledge and follow up with the faculty relevant procedures, and to follow existing guidelines for all health care workers in their clinical placement teaching institutions.

Whilst it is inappropriate to discriminate against such students, it is essential that in the public interest their risk of transmission of blood-borne infections is eliminated. On this basis such students are precluded from participating in procedural activities that might result in the transmission of disease. These activities may include surgical or obstetric activities. The most common blood-borne diseases referred to in this policy are Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, and HIV. Counselling will be available either through the initial medical practitioner contacted, or an appropriate member of the faculty.

There is an obligation on the part of students who are carrying blood-borne diseases to meet initially with their course administrator so that an appropriate referral can be made and further advice and a course of study mapped out which does not preclude the student from completing the course. The faculty will not direct career changes, however career counselling will be provided to ensure that the student does not have unrealistic expectations. All relevant issues will be openly and fully discussed.

All students should note that each case will be managed individually and with the strictest confidentiality.

It is important to emphasise again that the faculty does not consider that a relative is an appropriate person to be involved in this consultative process.

4. Student Declaration

Each student is required to sign a declaration confirming

- He/she has met all faculty requirements regarding immunisation, testing and follow-up requirements, as documented in the Immunisation and Infection Risk Management Plan.
- He/she understands the concepts and significance of observing 'standard precautions' at all times during Health Care Worker training where contact with blood and body substances occurs and takes responsibility for complying with these.

- He/she understands it is his/her responsibility to ensure that he/she retains the Vaccination Statement / Card and must produce it on request to any faculty or clinical site staff member on request.
- He/she understands the reporting requirements and follow-up in relation to existing or subsequent course-associated or other incidents or behaviours that affect blood-borne status and carry an infection risk.

Any student unwilling to comply with these guidelines must notify their course administrators and arrange to discuss their specific concerns with the Deputy Dean of the Faculty.

5 Overseas Placements

During their program many students will spend time either overseas or in remote locations within Australia. These will usually be elective placements. These new environments may expose students to new infections or to a greater risk of infection.

The faculty expects students to be fully aware of the health risks relevant to these environments and to maintain strict compliance with precautions that will reduce these risks. Many will be the same as those outlined in this document, but students may need to obtain additional vaccinations and become familiar with procedures relevant to new or different infections.

When overseas electives are planned, the faculty will provide details regarding:

- i) the risk associated with participation in exposure-prone procedures during placements;
- ii) specific health risks which may be encountered, and appropriate precautions regarding these;
- iii) drugs to be obtained which may need to be taken urgently in the event of an inadvertent exposure to the risk of acquiring HIV infection, in locations where these drugs are not readily available;
- iv) forms for students to provide documentary evidence that relevant advice on health risks has been obtained;
- v) action to be taken if exposure to blood-borne viruses occurs.

6 Summary

All steps taken by the faculty in relation to infectious diseases and their transmission are intended to ensure each student is fully informed about these important issues and that he/she, and the public are protected prior to exposure in clinical situations which may occur from very early in the course.

Understanding and awareness of these issues is vital if risks involved throughout the course and beyond are to be minimised. The availability of counselling from an appropriate medical practitioner, based on a broad infectious diseases knowledge and a clear understanding of faculty policy, is also fundamental to this process. All students are strongly advised to make full use of this counselling as the situation demands. Failure to do so may compromise the safety of both students and patients in the health care system.

Students should have the clear understanding that it is not possible to become a trainee health care worker in the current era without incurring an infection transmission risk, but that it is possible to minimise the risk to acceptable levels. Whilst the faculty accepts responsibility for the educational and practical aspects of these infection related matters, the learning and understanding of relevant information and the implementation of safe practices in relation to all aspects of training, will be entirely the responsibility of students, as will appropriate medical consultation as advised in these guidelines.