



Policy Title:

Students Exposed to Blood Borne Pathogens

Policy Identifier:

USCSOMC – STA – 1.11

Prepared by: Office of Student Affairs	Creation Date: 3-4-24
Reviewed by: Student Health Nurse	Review Date:
Approved by: MD Program Policy and Procedures Committee	Effective Date: 10-23-24
Category: Student Affairs	

LCME Standards

12.8 - Student Exposure Policies/Procedures

Scope

University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Columbia MD students.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of USC School of Medicine Columbia to maintain a safe environment for patients, students, faculty, and staff. Students caring for patients in University of South Carolina School of Medicine (USC SOM)-affiliated teaching hospitals and clinics experience risk of exposure to several infectious diseases including hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and human immunodeficiency virus. Consequently, these policies state the required actions expected of all USCSOM students involved in patient care to prevent transmission of such infections to themselves and to prevent or minimize clinical disease in the event they undergo significant exposure.

Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a safe healthcare environment and provide for the well-being of patients, students, and staff. The policy outlines required actions expected of all students involved in patient care to minimize the risk of transmission of infections to themselves and others and to prevent or minimize clinical disease in the event they experience significant exposure. The LCME expects that a medical school has policies in place that effectively address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards.

Procedures

Orientation

During M-I orientation and M-III orientations, students receive training on the procedures to follow in case of a potential blood borne pathogens exposure. These procedures are linked to the student’s “badge buddy” which takes them to a web page that outlines the procedures below. Faculty also have a link on their “badge buddy” to these same procedures.



Procedures to Follow After a Potential Blood Borne Pathogens Exposure

Exposed students should wash the area thoroughly (soap and water if skin, water if eyes) and notify their supervisor of the incident immediately. If a supervisor is not immediately available, they should contact the Employee Health office without delay.

Any student that experiences an exposure incident will be offered an immediate medical evaluation, post-exposure evaluation, and follow-up in accordance with applicable OSHA standards. Post-exposure follow-up will be provided by (and if necessary or required, arranged by) the USC School of Medicine Employee Health Services. Management of exposure incidents will include counseling the student regarding risks, evaluation and testing to mitigate medical risks and monitor reported illnesses, and treatment and follow-up as indicated or prescribed by treating physicians.

The USC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health office shall be contacted immediately following an exposure to blood and/or body fluids. The contact numbers for the USC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health office, in order of preference, are:

- Jennifer Evans, LPN: office 803-216-3374 cell 618-559-0419
- Eric R. Williams, MD, : 803-216-3616 cell 803-727-9788

The exposed student may or may not need to present in person to the Employee/Student Health office, depending on the nature of the exposure and the availability of the source patient for testing. The student will be instructed by Employee/Student Health staff regarding whether a face to face consultation is necessary. The Employee/Student Health office is located on campus at USCSOM: 6311 Garners Ferry Rd Building 3 Room 309 Columbia, SC 29209.

Students with exposures occurring after 4:00 p.m., on weekends or holidays, or in a facility other than the USC School of Medicine should immediately report the exposure to the supervisor/charge nurse and follow institutional policies for notifying the appropriate employee health, infection control, or clinical administrator of the facility in which the individual is working. The USC School of Medicine Employee Health office should be notified of the exposure as soon as possible.

Students should contact the place of the clerkship or rotation where the exposure happened and follow the detailed instructions of that location. Contact information for many of the clinical locations can be found [here](#). Regardless of the location of care, medical students should identify themselves specifically as a USCSOM medical students seeking evaluation and treatment for education-related exposures so that these exposures can be tracked by the Student Health Nurse.

Collection and testing of blood from Source Patients for HCV, HBV and HIV

In order to properly evaluate a student following an exposure to potentially infectious blood or body fluid, testing for blood-borne pathogen infection should be conducted on the source patient, assuming the source of the exposure is known. Each clinical department should have a protocol to follow that includes testing of the source patient for infection with HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. The student's supervisor and/or clinical staff in the department should be able to ensure that the proper tests are ordered without delay.

The source patient tests to order are:



- Rapid HIV antibody
- Hepatitis B surface antigen
- Hepatitis C antibody

If there are any questions regarding what tests should be ordered or how to order them, or if the student is unable to find a supervisor or clinical employee who can order the needed tests, he/she should call the USC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health nurse right away at 803-216-3374 or cell 618-559-0419. To expedite the process, the student should know the patient’s name and medical record number.

Post-Exposure Collection and testing of blood from Student for HCV, HBV and HIV

Testing the student is not necessary unless the source patient tests positive for a blood-borne infection. If the source patient tests positive for one of the above infections, the exposed employee's blood shall be collected as soon as feasible and tested.

Post-exposure prophylaxis, when medically indicated, will be provided as recommended by the U.S. Public Health Service.

Academic Support

The effects of infectious and/or environmental disease or disability are excused absences from courses/blocks/clerkships/rotation and the directors of these academic and clinical activities are required to provide appropriate make-up work, materials, evaluations or activities to allow the student to make progress towards their medical degree. When requested, the student will provide written verification from the treating physician or other professional to the course/block/clerkship/rotation director for the excused absence. Written verification from a treating physician or other professional should contain the date/time of the absence including both start and end date/times of the excused absence but should not include the details of the reason for the absence in order to protect the student’s privacy.

If the impact of the infectious and/or environmental disease or disability is to the extent that the student’s ability to continue their medical education has been significantly impaired, medically inadvisable, or impossible, they will be referred to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in order to submit a petition for a leave of absence.

Contacts

USC School of Medicine Employee/Student Health Office
Office of Student Affairs

History

Date of Change	Change
3-4-24	Transferred existing policy to current policy template