



Employment of Healthcare Worker Infected with Blood Borne Viruses

Procedure Number

CHC-IC-0052

Version Nos:

3

1. Purpose

Transmission of blood borne viruses from the Health Care Worker (HCW) to the patient in the Healthcare system is extremely rare. However low, any real risk of transmission requires that all reasonable measures must be taken to guarantee that patients in the healthcare system are protected from the risk of acquiring life threatening infections as a consequences of their treatment, and that all West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB) health care workers have a safe working environment.

2. Application

This Policy applies to all prospective Healthcare Employees who are infected with a Blood Borne Virus -Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV) or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and demonstrate an active virus and who are seeking employment to clinical areas with direct patient contact and involved in invasive exposure prone procedures.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure:

Exposure Prone Procedures

Are described as those procedures where there is a risk of injury to the Health Care Worker and may result in the exposure of the patients open tissue to the **Blood** of the Health Care Worker. These procedures include those where the workers gloved hands may be in contact between the skin (usually finger and thumb) of the Health Care Worker and sharp surgical instruments, needle tips, or sharp tissues (splinters of bone or teeth) in a blind or highly confined anatomic site such as the body cavities or in visualised and / or confined body space where hands or fingertips may not be completely visible at all times (this includes injection giving)

Non-Exposure Prone Procedures

Procedures which lack the characteristics of the above statement are unlikely to pose a risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses from infected Health Care Worker to patient i.e. where the hands and fingertips of the Healthcare Worker are visible and are outside the patients body at all times, examination/procedures that do not require the use of sharp instruments are not considered to be exposure prone and therefore unlikely to pose a risk of transmission of HIV, HBV, or HCV from infected Healthcare Worker to patient

4. Responsibilities

For the Purpose of this Policy

Managers are required to:

- Ensure all prospective employee applications are aware that a request can be made to undertake pre-employment screening and health checks. The completion of a Health and Safety Declaration form is required with a clearance by the Health and Safety Advisor.
- Endeavour to clarify job descriptions , clinical roles and invasive exposure prone procedures
- Ensure that the health status of an applicant is required if performing invasive or operative procedures and are within regulated guidelines and policy.



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- Be aware that each infected prospective employee needs to be considered individually based on infection levels and requirements of clinical role i.e. if demonstrates an active virus the staff member may be only considered in a non-clinical role
- Health Care Workers who know or believe themselves to be infected with HBV, HCV or HIV could put patients at risk and so must seek appropriate council and act upon that advice. This advice could include a requirement not to practice, or to limit practice in certain ways. No Health Care Worker with such an infection should continue in clinical practice merely on the basis of his/her own assessment. It is unethical, could be deemed professional misconduct, for a Health Care Worker so infected to act in away that puts a patient at risk. Each registration authority should maintain a list of Health Care Workers who are qualified and prepared to act as consultants to advise others in their profession or students as to how they may need to limit their practice when suffering from HBV, HCV or HIV.

Employees Shall:

- Healthcare Workers understand that they have a legal obligation to co-operate with the employer to the extent necessary to enable the employer to fulfil the duty of a health and safety obligation in the workplace
- Comply with directions relating to workplace health and safety including health and safety of staff member patients and clients
- Not wilfully place at risk the health and safety of any other person in the workplace
- Not attempt to undertake any exposure prone procedures (refer to Definition)
- Minimise the risk of infecting others by covering cuts and grazes with impervious occlusive dressing and keeping all moist or crusting wounds covered
- Consult with Infection Control or Medical Microbiologist with any concerns
- Agree to regular serology titre level checks

9. Precautions and Considerations

- ➔ The most effective means of preventing Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV) or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, (HIV) transmission in a healthcare setting is by **strict adherence to Standard Precautions and established Infection Control practices.**
- ➔ These decreases the opportunity of direct exposure to blood and body fluids for the healthcare worker and patients

8. References

- New South Wales Medical Board <http://www.nswmb.org.au/index.pl?page=70>
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons – Policy on Infection Control in Surgery <http://www.surgeons.org/cgi-bin/redirector.cgi>
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council of the United Kingdom Statement On Human Immunodeficiency Virus - March 2008



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- Auckland District Health Board – Infection Control - Blood Borne Viral Infections
http://www.adhb.govt.nz/CETU/IMGs/Infection_control.htm
- Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992) and Amendments
- HRANZ Joint Guidelines for registered health care workers on transmissible major viral infections November 2005
- Employment Policy on protection Against Infection with Blood Borne Viruses
July 2006
<http://209.85.173.132/search?q=cache:0MX3ufbDMN4J:www.gatesheadhealth.nhs.u...>

WCDHB Infection Control Manual 2010

WCDHB Occupational Safety and Health Policy and Procedure Manual.

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