

Occupational Health and Infectious Diseases: Preclinical Placement Requirements for Health Care Worker Students

This document outlines immunization and other occupational health requirements that health care worker students need before they begin any clinical placement in a health facility through the course of their health professional program. Health Canada in their guideline “Prevention and Control of Occupational Infections in Health Care” use the term health care worker (HCW) to include any individual who has the potential to acquire or transmit infectious agents during the course of his or her work in health care and includes students and researchers.¹

The medical literature and our own workplace experience documents the potential for health care workers to acquire infections, both in and outside the workplace, and for them to transmit infection to patients, co-workers, and family members.^{2 3 4} These infections may be spread through the airborne route (e.g. tuberculosis, varicella, measles), droplets (e.g. respiratory syncytial virus, influenza, rubella, pertussis), contact (e.g. hepatitis A, group A streptococcus), and mucosal or percutaneous exposure (e.g. hepatitis B and C, HIV).⁵ Several of these infections are vaccine preventable. Most of these vaccine preventable infections may be transmitted from person-to-person. With that in mind, both the Steering Committee on Infection Control Guidelines and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization have provided recommendations for health care worker immunization.⁶

The following forms (Faculty of Health Professions Immunization Record and Mandatory Tuberculosis Skin Test) are to be completed by a health care professional (physician, nurse practitioner, public health nurse or pharmacist) prior to your commencement of clinical learning experiences at Dalhousie University. It is advised that all of your immunizations be up-to-date before you begin your program as some immunization schedules take several months to complete. Please read the form carefully as there are different documentation requirements for some of the diseases. You will be required to comply with all requests for documentation. Please present the completed forms to the university official responsible for your program when you begin.

We hope that you enjoy your program!

¹ Health Canada. Prevention and control of occupational infections in health care. CCDR 2002; 28S1.

² Sepkowitz K.A. Occupationally acquired infections in health care workers. Part 1. Ann Intern Med 1996; 125:826-34.

³ Sepkowitz K.A. Occupationally acquired infections in health care workers. Part II. Ann Intern Med 1996; 125:917-28.

⁴ Patterson W.B., Craven D.E., Schwartz D.A., Nardell E.A., Kasmer J., Noble J. Occupation hazards to hospital personnel. Ann Intern Med 1985; 102:658-80.

⁵ Health Canada. Routine practices and additional precautions for preventing the transmission of infection in health care. CCDR 1999; 25S4.

⁶ Health Canada. Canadian Immunization Guide. Canadian Medical Association 2002 (6th edition). Ottawa, ON, and, Health Canada. Prevention and control of occupational infections in health care. CCDR 2002; 28S1.