

Communicable Diseases and Occupational Health For Applicants to and Students in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medicine

McMASTER POLICY

A. Applicants

All applicants should be aware that they will be required to participate in the care of patients with various communicable diseases including hepatitis, TB and AIDS throughout their education. Therefore, there is a risk that the student may contract a communicable disease during the course of their studies.

As each student has a responsibility to prevent the spread of communicable diseases to others, the Faculty of Health Sciences is committed to providing education and training to all students in the methods of preventing spread of communicable diseases that is consistent with Health Canada Guideline Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care (Reference: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/ccdr-rmtc/99vol25/25s4/index.html>) and the Ontario Hospital Association/Ontario Medical Association Communicable Disease Surveillance Protocols for Ontario Hospitals.

B. Requirements on acceptance into the program

1. All students are expected to be in a state of health such that they may participate in the academic program, including patient care, without posing a risk to themselves or others. (Reference: Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM) Policy Document: Essential Skills and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine; http://65.39.131.180/ContentPage.aspx?name=MD_Program_Admissions)
2. All students will be required to understand and comply with Faculty/program immunization policies and requirements. All students will be required to comply with provincial communicable disease surveillance protocols developed under the Public Hospitals Act, Regulation 965. (Reference: Public Hospitals Act, R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 965, http://192.75.156.68/DBLaws/Regs/English/900965_e.htm)

C. Students with a communicable disease

Strict confidentiality concerning the student's state of health will be maintained. The student is central to the process. Students who are accepted into the program, who have a communicable disease, may pursue their studies provided that their continued involvement does not pose a health or safety hazard to themselves or to others. Students will be offered counseling regarding career decisions and transferring.

1. Students with tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV infection are professionally obligated, on acceptance, to inform the relevant Assistant Dean (Undergraduate, Postgraduate).

2. The Assistant Dean should consult with an Expert Board (ExB), and/or other experts, as appropriate.

When a student's clinical duties or clinical exposure is to be modified, limited or abbreviated, the Assistant Dean should be notified. The Assistant Dean will request input from the Expert Board regarding the details of the modifications or limitations.

3. The student will be offered advice and counseling that will assist him/her regarding clinical practice.
4. Students who acquire a communicable disease, or incur an injury or other medically related incident during their education program are required to seek medical attention immediately. The incident must be reported and documented by the student, at the earliest opportunity, to the Faculty of Health Sciences Occupational Health and Safety Office, the appropriate clinical supervisor, program director and the Assistant Dean. The Assistant Dean will ensure that appropriate documentation and counseling is provided through the assistance of the Expert Board.
5. Students and residents have the right to appeal decisions made by the Assistant Dean or the Expert Board by submitting, in writing or in person, a proposed amendment to the decision and the rationale supporting such an amendment. The student or resident may submit additional documentation from his/her personal physician or other healthcare worker in support of their appeal. In the case where the student's or resident's appeal is rejected by the Assistant Dean and/or Expert Board, the student or resident may engage in the Student Appeal Procedure of the University to submit any additional appeal.

D. Composition of the Expert Board

The case will be reviewed anonymously by the Expert Board. To ensure that the student's confidentiality is respected and maintained, the student will be advised of the membership of the Board prior to the case being reviewed. Disclosure of the nature of the communicable disease will be limited to the relevant Assistant Dean and the Director of the student's education program.

Assistant Dean, Chair (from appropriate program)
Infectious diseases expert physicians (2)
Physician from the discipline of the student (if applicable)
Student representative (e.g., local PAIRO representative)

Additional resources available to the Expert Board:

Medical Officer of Health
Occupational Health
Ethicist

The Expert Board will meet on an ad hoc basis, as required.

E. Co-Responsibility with Hospitals

The Faculty of Health Sciences and the teaching hospitals each are responsible for ensuring that students are adequately instructed in infection prevention and control as it relates to communicable diseases. This will include the following:

1. The Faculty will provide an introductory program on routine practices/standard precautions, infection prevention and control that is consistent with current guidelines and occupational health and safety. In addition, the Faculty will inform students as to their responsibilities with respect to infection prevention and control and occupational health and safety.
2. Affiliated teaching hospitals are required to comply with the Communicable Disease Surveillance Protocols for Ontario Hospitals developed under the Public Hospital Act, Regulation 965. Compliance with these Protocols requires the hospitals, in liaison with the University's academic programs, to provide instruction in infection prevention and control and occupational health and safety.

F. Occupational Health

All students will receive appropriate instruction with respect to adverse exposures (e.g., chemicals and radiation) which they may encounter during their program.

"While students are not covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act or its regulations, the University is also committed to fulfilling its responsibilities concerning the health and safety of its students." (Note: residents, as employees of the hospitals are covered through the hospital Occupational Health; refer to PAIRO/CAHO agreement, Article 19.14:

<http://pairo.jibby-jab.com/Content/Default.aspx?pg=1091>)

Examples of specific communicable diseases included in this policy:

Blood-borne pathogens

HIV/Hepatitis B, C, D.

Enteric pathogens

Salmonella / Shigella / Campylobacter / E-coli 0:157/ verotoxin producing Giardia Amoebiasis

Other

Influenza / Hepatitis A / Meningococcal disease/ Measles / Mumps /Rubella / Tuberculosis / Varicella