Policy Title: Communicable Disease Exposure

Policy Number: EC.12.07.170815

Applies to: All medical students

Date: 06/04/2024

1.0 Policy Statement

Medical students with communicable diseases are not permitted to engage in patient contact until conditions have resolved or are no longer a threat to the health or safety of the community.

2.0 Definitions

*Airborne Pathogens:* The relevant pathogens may be viruses, bacteria, or fungi, and they may be spread through coughing, sneezing, raising of dust, spraying of liquids, or similar activities likely to generate aerosol particles or droplets.

*Bloodborne Pathogen:* Infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

*Communicable Disease:* An infectious disease transmissible (as from person to person) by direct contact with an affected individual or the individual’s discharges or by indirect means (as by a vector).

*Infectious Disease:* Disorders caused by organisms – such as bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites.

*CDC Partial List:* Diseases that preclude students from being allowed to have patient contact without prior medical clearance include but are not limited to:

- Active chickenpox (varicella), measles (rubeola), German measles (rubella), shingles (herpes zoster), acute viral hepatitis, tuberculosis (TB), and COVID-19
- Group A streptococcal disease (strep throat) until 24 hours after initiation of antibiotic treatment
- Draining or infected skin lesions

*Pathogens:* Bacteria, viruses, or other microorganisms that can cause disease.
3.0 Responsibilities
Office of Student Experience (Student Affairs)

4.0 Procedures
Medical students with a communicable disease will be allowed to attend classes and participate in other college-related activities, provided their presence does not create a substantial risk of illness or transmission of the disease to others. However, medical students with communicable diseases will not be permitted to engage in patient contact until their illness has been resolved or is no longer in a phase known to be contagious.

If a student is unsure whether they should participate in patient care, the student should contact the Office of Student Experience (Student Affairs), their Associate Dean for Clinical Education, and/or their Clinical Campus Coordinator.

Students who contract a serious or communicable disease or develop typical signs/symptoms of an infectious illness should consider themselves to be contagious and should remove themselves from in-person academic and clinical experiences. Students should follow communication procedures outlined in the Medical Student Attendance Policy.

Students who know or who have reasonable basis for believing they are infected with airborne or bloodborne pathogens are expected to seek medical care. Medical students will be given an approved absence from educational activities in order to seek medical care and should follow procedures outlined in the Post Exposure Care Policy.

Students who are at high risk of infection from patients or others because of their immune status or any other reason are encouraged to take approved infection control measures and to discuss their clinical responsibilities and educational activities with their personal health care provider. If the health care provider believes that there are certain assignments the individual should not accept due to personal health reasons, it is the student’s responsibility to discuss these concerns with the WSU Spokane Access Services for reasonable accommodation considerations.

In some cases, students may be unable to participate fully in medical school responsibilities or meet the Technical Standards because of their illness without reasonable accommodations. In these cases, students may seek assistance from the WSU Spokane Access Center to discuss reasonable accommodations. The Associate Dean for Assessment, Evaluation, and Curriculum Management and the Associate Dean for Curriculum will review the proposed accommodation plan to determine if it is reasonable and not a fundamental alteration to the programmatic requirements and develop a plan to implement it. The Student Learning Center will provide support to students during the accommodations process.

Students will also be required to meet the communicable disease policies of the clinical affiliates with whom they are rotating.
5.0 Related Policies

Immunizations and Tuberculosis Screening Policy EC.12.05.170516
Medical Student Attendance Policy CU.06.04.170815
Post Exposure Care Policy EC.12.04.170815
Medical Student Leave, Withdrawal and Readmission Policy EC.10.01.170912
Technical Standards AD.10.02.170508
Washington State Policy [RCW 18.130.175](https://laws.wa.gov/RCW/18.130.175)

6.0 Key Search Words

Communicable disease, exposure, infectious, patient care

7.0 Revision History

Original Approval Policy number 5/12/2016 SA.12.08.160512 EC.12.07.170815

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