



## **Procedure on the Management of Blood Borne Viruses In the Faculty of Health**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Healthcare workers and health students “are expected to protect the health and safety of their patients”, including the prevention of transmitting a blood borne virus (BBV).<sup>1</sup> The Department of Health and Ageing recommends that all healthcare workers should be vaccinated against hepatitis B (HBV) and should provide evidence of immunity.<sup>2</sup> It is recommended that healthcare workers, who perform exposure prone procedures (EPPs), should be tested for BBVs prior to performing these tasks and that the worker should be aware of their BBV status.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Health and Ageing recommends annual testing “with immediate retesting and follow-up care after a potential ... exposure” for those involved in EPPs.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.2 Definition of an EPP**

An EPP is defined in the Australian National Guidelines as “a procedure where there is a risk of injury to the HCW [healthcare worker] resulting in exposure of the patient’s open tissues to the blood of the worker. These procedures include those where the worker’s hands (whether gloved or not) may be in contact with sharp instruments, needle tips or sharp tissues (spicules of bone or teeth) inside a patient’s open body cavity, wound or confined anatomical space where the hands or fingertips may not be completely visible at all times”.<sup>5</sup> Healthcare workers or students who are infected with a BBV must not perform EPPs.<sup>6</sup>

The key issue related to transmission of BBVs is whether a non-immune or infected student will perform EPPs or procedures that may have the potential for transmitting or acquiring a BBV. The disciplines within the Faculty of Health that are likely to perform EPPs or perform activities that have the potential to transmit or acquire a BBV include:

- Medical Laboratory Science;
- Nursing;
- Optometry;
- Paramedicine; and,
- Podiatry.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government, *Department of Health and Ageing (2012). Australian National Guidelines for the Management of Health Care Workers Known to be Infected with Blood-borne Viruses*, p.3; AHPRA (2014), *Public Consultation: Guidelines for the regulatory management of registered health practitioner and students infected with blood-borne viruses*, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.3; Queensland Government, Department of Health (2013), p.2; AHPRA (2014), p.3

### 1.3 Purpose

This procedure aims to describe guidelines and practices within the Faculty of Health for the management of BBVs to ensure that:

- Students are aware of their infection status with regards to HBV, and are encouraged to be aware of their status with regards to HCV and HIV;
- Students are aware of the vaccination schedule required to attend a placement in a Queensland Health Facility;
- Students are aware of what constitutes an exposure prone procedure (EPP) within their discipline;
- Students and Staff are aware of their responsibilities to prevent BBV transmission or acquisition; and
- There are clearly described communication procedures.

### 1.4 Application

This procedure applies to students in the QUT Faculty of Health in the following disciplines that are likely to perform EPPs or perform activities that have the potential to transmit or acquire a BBV:

- Medical Laboratory Science;
- Nursing;
- Optometry;
- Paramedicine; and,
- Podiatry.

This procedure also applies to any student in the QUT Faculty of Health attending placement within a Queensland Health facility, QUT Health Clinic (where discipline notifies requirement) and private facilities as required, including (but not limited to) the following disciplines:

- Clinical Physiology;
- Medical Imaging;
- Exercise and Nutrition Sciences;
- Radiation Therapy;
- Pharmacy
- Health Information Management
- Social Work and Human Services
- Psychology
- Biomedical Sciences

### 1.5 Roles and Responsibilities

#### *Responsibility of Faculty*

- The Faculty of Health is responsible under the Queensland Health Deed for ensuring that students are aware and comply with the Policy and Guidelines for immunisation and infection control and the Queensland Health's *Guideline for the vaccination of healthcare workers*.

- The Faculty has a responsibility to support students who disclose that they are infected with a BBV and minimise the risk of cross-infection or acquisition of other BBVs, including appropriate training, infrastructure, infection control measures and equipment.<sup>7</sup>
- The Faculty also has a responsibility to ensure the rights of an infected student are safeguarded and that principles of anti-discrimination and privacy are applied, whilst maintaining patient safety. There is a legal duty of confidentiality to ensure that any disclosures remain confidential.<sup>8</sup> This obligation applies to both the Faculty and the Placement Supervisor.
- All information collected in relation to vaccination and immunity status is stored in the student's HPRM record under a restricted DNC that can only be accessed by Health WILS staff.
- The AHPRA guideline notes that if the practitioner (or student) with a BBV is complying with current guidelines, they are not placing the public at risk and "they are not considered to be 'impaired'" and therefore are not required to be reported to AHPRA.<sup>9</sup>
- The Faculty advises students who disclose that they have a BBV to be assessed by an appropriate medical practitioner and if the student is potentially infectious, that they are provided advice on career options.<sup>10</sup>
- The Faculty Work Integrated Learning Support team will refer any student who require further assistance or support to meet these requirements to Counselling Services
- If a student cannot meet the vaccination requirements for their course they will be referred to the Assistant Dean (Learning & Teaching) for further advice.

#### *Responsibilities of Students*

*The following requirements are for students who enrol in medical laboratory science, nursing, optometry, paramedicine or podiatry:*

- The School, QUT Health Clinic Coordinators and the WILS team promote awareness of the student's responsibility to have annual serology testing for HBV and that students are encouraged to undergo testing for HCV and HIV;
- Students submit the appropriate *Vaccine Preventable Diseases Evidence Certification* form, signed by a medical practitioner, to the WILS team prior to their first placement or before undertaking EPPs or activities where there is risk of transmission of a BBV (including activities in the QUT Health Clinic). This involves undergoing serological testing for HBV;
- Students must not perform EPPs while they are HBV DNA positive, but may be permitted to return to EPPs following spontaneous clearing of HBV DNA or clearing of HBV DNA in response to treatment.
- Students are encouraged to undergo annual serology testing for HCV and HIV and if the outcome is positive, students are required to disclose to QUT. **NOTE:** *If disclosed, the Facility Manager or Clinic Coordinator, in the case of a QUT Clinic placement, will be informed by the WILS team regarding the disclosure;*
- The Facility Manager, Infection Control Officer or, in the case of the QUT Health Clinics, the Clinic Coordinator, and the Course Coordinator are notified of any students who are non-immune or infected, and who are enrolled in courses where EPPs are likely to be performed

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp.3, 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> AHPRA (2014), *Public Consultation: Guidelines for the regulatory management of registered health practitioner and students infected with blood-borne viruses*, p.10.

or there is potential for transmission or acquisition of a BBV (e.g. Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Optometry, Paramedic and Podiatry students). The Course Coordinator advises on matters such as the risks involved in placement, what constitutes an EPP in the discipline, appropriate infection controls, PPE and any potential adjustments to activities generally undertaken as part of a placement or within the QUT Health Clinic (if relevant). This discussion should take place in person and a record of the discussion placed on the student's file;

- Students are aware of infection control precautions if they are non-immune or infected;
- The Faculty ensures communication of the status of non-immune or infected students to the Course Coordinator, external organisations or within the QUT Health Clinic (if student has provided consent to disclose);
- If student has not provided consent, student is then required to contact the Facility Manager or Infectious Diseases Officer within the host placement organisation if they are not immune (or their immunity status is unknown) or if they are a carrier of HBV. Student must notify WILS team once disclosure to host placement site has occurred by providing a signed Statutory Declaration confirming the required disclosure to site.

*The following requirements are for students who enrol in a QUT Faculty of Health course and attending placement within a Queensland Health facility, QUT Health Clinic (where discipline notifies requirement) and private facilities as required:*

- The School, QUT Health Clinic Coordinators and the WILS team promote awareness of the student's responsibility to have annual serology testing for HBV;
- Students submit the *Vaccine Preventable Diseases Evidence Certification* form, signed by a medical practitioner, to the WILS team prior to their first placement. This involves undergoing serological testing for HBV;
- The Facility Manager, Infection Control Officer or, in the case of the QUT Health Clinics, the Clinic Coordinator, and the Course Coordinator are notified of any students who are non-immune or infected. The Course Coordinator advises on matters such as the risks involved in placement, appropriate infection controls, PPE and any potential adjustments to activities generally undertaken as part of a placement or within the QUT Health Clinic (if relevant). This discussion should take place in person and a record of the discussion placed on the student's file;
- Students are aware of infection control precautions if they are non-immune or infected;
- The Faculty ensures communication of the status of non-immune or infected students to the Course Coordinator, external organisations or within the QUT Health Clinic (if student has provided consent to disclose);
- If student has not provided consent, student is then required to contact the Facility Manager or Infectious Diseases Officer within the host placement organisation if they are not immune (or their immunity status is unknown) or if they are a carrier of HBV. Student must notify WILS team once disclosure to host placement site has occurred by providing a signed Statutory Declaration confirming the required disclosure to site.

#### *Responsibilities of Infected Student*

- To disclose relevant personal or medical information where their health status may increase the risk of injury to themselves or others, including transmitting and acquiring BBVs.

- To prevent and to protect themselves from the transmission of BBVs.<sup>11</sup>
- To know their BBV status and to seek advice on safe limits of their practice and to comply with the national guidelines.<sup>12</sup>
- If infected with a BBV they must not perform EPPs.
- Infected students must adhere strictly to standard infection control precautions.<sup>13</sup> Disclosure to a supervisor is also required if performing EPPs or if there may be required to perform EPPs.<sup>14</sup> Otherwise there is no requirement for the infected healthcare worker to disclose their status.
- If infected with a BBV, to seek advice on issues related to personal care, monitoring and work practices from an appropriate medical practitioner.<sup>15</sup>
- If non-immune or infected, to be under the supervision of a qualified specialist medical practitioner, such as a specialist infectious diseases physician, specialist gastroenterologist and hepatologist and seek advice regarding their continued involvement in direct patient care.<sup>16</sup>
- If they may perform EPPs, students should be vaccinated against any BBV and they should undertake serology testing for BBV following every sharp injury or exposure to body fluids, secretions and excretions.<sup>17</sup>
- If a practitioner (or student) who is infected with a BBV does not comply with the national guidelines, they are placing the public at risk and could be notified to the health department who may take further action.<sup>18</sup> Students who are complying with the National Guidelines are not required to report their condition to National Boards or AHPRA<sup>19</sup>

#### *Students with Medical Exemption for Vaccination Requirements*

- Students who require exemption from vaccination requirements due to identified severe acute allergic or anaphylactic reaction after any previous vaccination, pregnancy or other medical condition must submit the *Medical Exemption for Vaccination* form (completed by their GP with supporting evidence) to the WILS team
- Students must not perform EPPs while they are not immune, but may be permitted to return to EPPs if medical exemption is temporary and student can complete and submit required vaccination and serology reports
- The Facility Manager, Infection Control Officer or, in the case of the QUT Health Clinics, the Clinic Coordinator, and the Course Coordinator are notified of any students who are non-immune and who are enrolled in courses where EPPs are likely to be performed or there is potential for transmission or acquisition of a BBV (e.g. Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Optometry, Paramedic and Podiatry students). The Course Coordinator advises on matters such as the risks involved in placement, what constitutes an EPP in the discipline, appropriate infection controls, PPE and any potential adjustments to activities generally undertaken as

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Government, Department of Health and Ageing (2012), p.3; Queensland Government, Department of Health (2013), *Guideline: Management of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus, and Hepatitis C Virus Infected Healthcare Workers*, p.1; AHPRA (2014), p.9.

<sup>12</sup> AHPRA (2014), p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Queensland Government, Department of Health (2013), p.1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> AHPRA (2014), p.10; Queensland Government, Department of Health (2013), p.2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6, 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

part of a placement or within the QUT Health Clinic (if relevant). This discussion should take place in person and a record of the discussion placed on the student's file;

- Students are aware of infection control precautions if they are non-immune;
- The Faculty ensures communication of the status of non-immune students to the Course Coordinator, external organisations or within the QUT Health Clinic (if student has provided consent to disclose);
- If student has not provided consent, student is then required to contact the Facility Manager or Infectious Diseases Officer within the host placement organisation if they are not immune (or their immunity status is unknown) or if they are a carrier of HBV. Student must notify WILS team once disclosure to host placement site has occurred by providing a signed Statutory Declaration confirming the required disclosure to site.

### **1.6 Communication to Students about the Procedure**

- Faculty of Health WILS team is responsible for informing students of the requirements when they first enter the course
- Faculty of Health WILS staff present Mandatory Documentation information (including vaccination requirements) at Orientation Week sessions;
- Students are sent emails detailing Mandatory Documentation information throughout their degree, including the semester before they are due to enrol in a placement unit to their QUT Student email account
- Students are sent follow up email reminders prior to submission deadline
- Vaccination requirements are outlined in the "Additional compulsory course costs and requirements" student page: <https://www.student.qut.edu.au/enrolment/fees-and-finances/study-costs/additional-compulsory-course-costs#h2-4>
- Requirements are also detailed on the Faculty of Health Workplace Integrated Learning Community site on Blackboard and the Faculty of Health Student Zone under Work Integrated Learning (WIL): <https://www.student.qut.edu.au/about/faculties-institutes-and-divisions/faculties/health/work-integrated-learning>
- Some disciplines email students a Getting Started checklist outlining Mandatory Requirements when they accept their offer to QU

**Table 1: Vaccination & Serology Requirements.**

Disease	Medical Laboratory Sciences; Nursing; Optometry; Paramedicine; Podiatry.		Exercise and Nutrition Sciences; Medical Imaging; Radiation Therapy; Other students undertaking a placement at QLD Health, QUT Health Clinic (where discipline notifies requirement) and private facilities as required.	
	Vaccination	Serology testing	Vaccination	Serology testing
Measles, Mumps, Rubella	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis	Mandatory	Not Applicable	Mandatory	Not Applicable
Varicella	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Hepatitis B	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
Hepatitis C	Not Applicable	Highly Recommended	Not Applicable	Highly Recommended
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	Not Applicable	Highly Recommended	Not Applicable	Highly Recommended
Tuberculosis	Mandatory only for Paramedicine students with particular countries of birth and residence. See vaccination form.	Not Applicable	Mandatory only for Nutrition & Dietetics students.	Not Applicable
Influenza	Mandatory only for Paramedicine. Highly recommended for all other students	Not Applicable	Highly recommended	Not Applicable
Hepatitis A	Highly recommended, in particular circumstances. See Vaccination form.	Not Applicable	Highly recommended, in particular circumstances. See Vaccination form.	Not Applicable