

Practice Education Guidelines for BC Communicable Disease Outbreaks

GL#3-4

Practice Guideline

September 4, 2007

Student practice education may be changed, suspended or delayed during a communicable disease* outbreak depending on the circumstances of the placement and type of outbreak*.

Guideline Details

Prevention

Frequent hand washing is the key to preventing the spread of infection* by contact, especially before and after caring for patients, or before and after eating anything. Alcohol hand antiseptic may also be used. Follow Routine Practices*. Use of protective clothing (such as gowns, gloves and masks) may also be necessary. (refer to [Practice Education Guidelines – Workplace Health and Safety; Respiratory Protection](#))

Outbreak*

If the outbreak is known to be preventable by immunization/vaccination, any unvaccinated or unprotected (not been exposed to previously) student or faculty will be asked to leave the premises and not allowed to return until Receiving Agency Occupational Health & Safety/Infection Control staff have determined that it is safe to do so.

Influenza Exception to exclusion:

- unvaccinated individual who takes anti-viral medication as prescribed and continues to take it until the outbreak is declared over.
- unvaccinated individual who obtains influenza vaccination during the outbreak may return to the clinical setting 14 days after vaccination or when outbreak is declared over.

If outbreak is not preventable by immunization/vaccination or when individual has been vaccinated/immunized against disease:

- **Continue with the placement (if student is in agreement) when** assigned placement is only on an outbreak unit and students/faculty were on unit just prior to and during initial the outbreak (already exposed).
- **Limit placement to a non-outbreak* unit when** placement involves more than one location (split placements, alternate placements, etc). Students and faculty are not permitted to move between locations when one of the locations is an outbreak unit.
- **Do not enter the outbreak unit(s) at all when** students are not specifically assigned to a location. Instead, move the students to unaffected areas of the facility (Example: Respiratory Therapy, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Laboratory, Radiology, Pharmacy, Dietetics, CardioTech, Audiology, Speech Therapy, Social Work, Spiritual Care).
- **Delay the start date of a placement when** students are scheduled to be on an outbreak unit until the outbreak is declared resolved (or reassign the placement to a non-outbreak unit).

* indicates term is defined under 'Definitions' section

Roles & Responsibilities

Placing Agency

- Ensure students have standard health and safety training including basic infection prevention
- Ensure students have practiced techniques such as hand washing, and for those involved in direct care, Routine Practices* (use of protective barriers)
- Develop and implement immunization policy (refer to [Practice Education Guideline - Immunization](#))
- Identify the primary Practice Education contact for communication between the Placing and Receiving Agency in the event of a communicable disease outbreak.

Students/On Site Faculty:

- Wash hands between patients, when entering and leaving units, and as otherwise indicated
- Be prepared to provide proof of immunity status
- Do not share food with colleagues while in the Receiving Agency facility.
- Do not cross over between an outbreak unit and a non-outbreak unit. This includes lounges and washrooms dedicated to those personnel caring for patients on outbreak units.
- Do not come into a Receiving Agency facility if displaying any of the symptoms of a communicable disease (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or respiratory infection)
- Leave the practice setting and go home immediately if beginning to display any symptoms while in a Receiving Agency facility.
- Notify supervisor/faculty.
- Do not return to the Receiving Agency facility until after the symptoms are resolved (if ill with gastroenteritis, do not return until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved).

Receiving Agency:

- identify the primary Practice Education contact for communication between the Receiving and Placing Agency.
- when possible, facilitate the movement of placements or extension of experience if needed to fulfill placement commitments.

Consequences of Non-compliance

Spread of disease.

Rationale or Background

During outbreaks, restrictions for students are greater than for Receiving Agency employees. This is because students may be new to the facility, unsure of appropriate barrier use, and may be relatively unsupervised. These restrictions also help to contain and prevent the spread of infection.

Students are not restricted completely from the facility but rather requested to not go between an outbreak unit and a non-outbreak unit. It is preferable that the students not work on outbreak units at all, if possible, to limit the potential spread of infection. However, when students have already been on the unit, and were there before and during the start of an outbreak, they have already been exposed. The experience can become a learning experience if properly supervised and good infection prevention practices maintained.

* indicates term is defined under 'Definitions' section

The level of the restriction is based on the degree of the outbreak. If a whole facility is deemed an outbreak location, students may be barred completely from entering the facility.

Definitions

Infectious Disease: a disease that damages or injures the host so as to impair host function. Caused by the presence and activity of a pathogenic microbial agent (e.g. viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, parasites). Transmission occurs by several pathways such as through contact with infected individuals, by water, food, airborne inhalation, or through vector-borne spread.

Communicable Disease: an infectious disease caused by germs spread from one person to another (contagious). Often spread through direct contact with an individual, contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals, or with objects that the infected individual has contaminated. Some communicable diseases are preventable by vaccination/immunization.

Outbreak: when cases of a communicable disease, such as flu, diarrhea, skin infection (e.g. scabies, chicken pox), or respiratory infection, are happening more than usual. The Infection Control Officer and/or the Medical Health Officer declare an outbreak. An outbreak can be sporadic (an occasional occurrence), endemic (regular cases often occurring in a region), epidemic (an unusually high number of cases in a region), or pandemic (a global epidemic).

Non-Outbreak: either when there is no evidence of an outbreak in that location or when conditions have become such that the Infection Control Officer and/or the Medical Health Officer has declared the outbreak over for that location.

Routine Practices: a set of infection control precautions that are to be used with all patients, at all times, regardless of presumed infectious status or diagnosis.

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