

Last Approved 20 March 2025 | Review every 3 years (Next Review 2028)

Policy on the Effects of Infectious and Environmental Disease or Disability on Medical Student Learning Activities

Office of Accountability:	Associate Dean, MD Program, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	MD Program, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Approver:	MD Curriculum & Program Committee (MDCPC)
Scope:	This policy applies to all medical students at the University of Alberta, irrespective of the geographically distributed site at which they are located.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this policy is to describe the effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical student learning activities at any site of the MD program at the University of Alberta, with consideration of both the safety of the patient and the learning of the student.

The MD Program, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, will inform students of the *Policy on the Effects of Infectious and Environmental Disease or Disability on Medical Student Learning Activities* by posting it online on the MD Program Policies & Procedures website and by sharing it with students at the beginning of years 1 and 3 for review and sign off. Education about the effects of disease or disability on student learning activities and methods of prevention occurs throughout medical school.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

This policy addresses element 12.8 (Student Exposure Policies/Procedures) of the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS), which states:

A medical school has policies in place that effectively address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards, including:

- a) education of medical students about methods of prevention
- b) procedures of care and treatment after exposure, including a definition of financial responsibility
- c) effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical

student learning activities.

POLICY

1. As registrants of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA), MD undergraduate program students must comply with the CPSA [Blood-borne Infections in Health Care Workers Advice to the Professions](#) document.
2. Medical students must be immunized and tested for viral illnesses and tuberculosis (TB) as specified by the CPSA and the University of Alberta before applying for an educational license from the CPSA.
3. To comply with CPSA guidelines, students must be tested immediately after an exposure (see [Medical Student Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards Procedure](#)).
4. The MD Program is not responsible for testing, reporting or monitoring students' status regarding blood borne pathogen (BBP) or airborne illnesses, including TB. This includes the financial implications of testing and monitoring.
5. Students who test positive for BBP above the SHEA standards of acceptable limits are required by the CPSA to report their status to the CPSA when they become aware of such status. Students are expected to report their status to the CPSA annually upon registration.
6. Students must confidentially report their BBP (if viral loads rise above SHEA standards of acceptable limits) or TB status to the MD Program and the OAW (Office of Advocacy and Wellbeing) on admission or when they become aware of such status.
7. When a student discloses a blood borne pathogen that information is kept strictly confidential and only shared if directed by the CPSA. If the CPSA or the student inform Office of Advocacy and Wellbeing (OAW) of a significant status changes in a student's BBP levels, the OAW will work with the student, the CPSA, and the MD Program to either tailor specific clinical activities to avoid EPPs within a placement, to modify the student's rotation schedule, or, when appropriate, to arrange a medical leave of absence.
8. If a student tests positive for a BBP or airborne pathogen, ongoing monitoring is done by the student's health care practitioner.
9. Students with acceptably low viral loads below the SHEA standards of acceptable limits, as assessed on an individual basis by a CPSA Expert Panel, are not required to take any extraordinary precautions and may perform all activities, including EPPs.

Entering students need to be screened for tuberculosis (TB) and Hep B prior to starting the MD Program, as required by licensing bodies and healthcare affiliates (e.g. College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA) or Alberta Health Services (AHS)).



Students with a suspected exposure to tuberculosis should follow the steps outlined in the MD Program’s [Medical Student Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards Procedure](#) for how to seek medical attention.

Students with known tuberculosis, HIV, Hep B/C are required to inform the MD Program of the diagnosis. The medical status of the learner will be kept confidential within a strict environment of stakeholders that are required to know for the purposes of curriculum

RELATED POLICIES

[Medical Student Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards Procedure](#)

RELATED LINKS

CPSA Blood-borne Infections in Health Care Workers Advice to the Professions
<https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CPSA-PHM-10-Blood-Borne-Infections-Policy.pdf>

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
BBF Blood or Body Fluid Exposure	Blood or Body Fluid Exposure is the result of an event where a person is exposed to potentially infectious blood or bodily fluids through one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percutaneous exposure through puncture of skin by needlestick or another sharp object ● Permucosal exposure through contact with mucous membranes ● Non-intact skin exposure through eczema, scratches, and damaged skin
BBP Blood Borne Pathogen	Blood Borne Pathogens are 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).
CACMS	The Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS) ensures that Canadian medical

Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools	faculties' MD programs meet the quality expected when producing tomorrow's doctors. Medical schools demonstrating compliance are afforded accreditation, a necessary condition for a program's graduates to be licensed as physicians.
CPSA	The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta
EPP Exposure-Prone Procedures	Exposure-Prone Procedures are invasive procedures where there is a higher than average risk that injury to the health-care worker may result in the exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood or body fluid of the worker.
OAW Office of Advocacy & Wellbeing	The Office of Advocacy and Wellbeing(OAW) in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta looks after issues pertaining to the health and well-being of learners and faculty. The office also advocates on their behalf.
MD Program The Doctor of Medicine Program	The MD Program in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta oversees the four-year program leading to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD).
PEP Post-exposure prophylaxis	Post-exposure prophylaxis is an emergency medical response given as soon as possible to reduce the risk of transmission of bloodborne pathogens after potential exposure. It is available for HIV and hepatitis B.
SHEA Guidelines Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America Guidelines	SHEA Category III: Procedures for which there is definite risk of bloodborne virus transmission or that have been classified previously as "exposure-prone" (more information here)

Approval History

Approver	Status	Date
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	19 April 2018
Dr. Tracey Hillier, Associate Dean	Revisions: Updated Learner Advocacy and Wellness to	12 June 2020



	Office of Advocacy and Wellness; removed LCME	
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	18 November 2021
Dr. Darryl Rolfson, Associate Dean	Added link to Shea Guidelines article in the definitions section	16 August 2023
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	20 March 2025