Policy: Infectious diseases and immunisation policy for students undertaking clinical placements in health facilities

Purpose

To advise students of the legislative ACT and NSW Government requirements regarding immunisation and blood–borne virus testing.

Overview

Clinical placements are a significant and sometimes mandatory component of a number of programs at the Australian National University (the University). The University relies upon state, territory and private health providers for access to clinical training facilities.

Access to these facilities is regulated by the operators of the facilities. This policy focuses upon the immunisation and infectious disease requirements of the ACT and NSW governments and their health services, as that is where the majority of University placements occur.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students undertaking clinical placements in health facilities

Policy Statement

Responsibilities of the University

2. The University supports the approach adopted by the ACT and NSW governments and their health services. This policy may be revised from time to time to reflect any developments by the ACT and NSW governments.

3. Students will be provided with copies of this policy at the time the University offers them a place in a program. This information will also be published on the University's policy website.
4. This policy provides links which outline the requirements of ACT and NSW Governments.

Responsibilities of students

5. Students are responsible for complying with all immunisation requirements of health facilities where they will undertake clinical placements.

6. Students are responsible for any costs incurred in meeting the requirements.

7. A student who is infected with a contagious disease, particularly a blood-borne virus and who knowingly participates in clinical placements without notifying the clinical placement facility of their infected status is engaging in conduct that is likely to put patients, colleagues and other staff at risk. Students engaging in such behaviour will face disciplinary proceedings that may result in exclusion from the University.

8. Students are advised that it is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW) and Crimes Act 1900 (ACT) to intentionally cause or attempt to cause another person to contract an infectious disease. This offence carries a jail term.

ACT and NSW Government requirements

9. The ACT Health and the NSW Department of Health have policies that require all students undertaking placements, or who require access in any capacity to facilities operated by them, to know their infectious status throughout the period they undertake the placement.


11. These policies also recommend students undertaking placements be vaccinated in accordance with the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as documented in The Australian Immunisation Handbook http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home

12. Students have a responsibility to protect their patients, their colleagues and themselves from infection. Students undertaking placements in health facilities, particularly those conducting exposure-prone procedures, are inevitably exposed to infectious diseases in the course of their training. Many of the diseases are
preventable through immunisation or by the adoption of safe-working practices.

Other placements in non–ACT and NSW jurisdictions

13. Where students undertake clinical placements in non–ACT and NSW government operated health facilities, such as health facilities operated by other state and territory governments or private providers, different requirements from those set out in this policy are likely to apply.

14. Students must identify and comply with these requirements with prior to a placement commencing. Given the extensive requirements that may apply students should allow ample time for this process to occur.

Results of testing

15. ACT Health, NSW Health or the health facility operator makes the decision and outcome on infectious disease status. The University does not make decisions on infectious disease status.  

16. Students should note that their clinical placement provider would likely limit their access to exposure prone procedures if they choose not to consent to the requirements outlined in this policy. In addition, choosing not to consent to the requirements may affect a student's ability to complete the requirements of his/her program.

17. Students who are not able to complete required clinical placements during their enrolment at the University as a result of their infectious disease status will be excluded from courses requiring placements in health facilities.

18. Students will be given advice to determine their eligibility to transfer to other University programs, if required.

Appeals

19. Appeals against the decision as a result of the outcome of their infectious disease status must be made directly to the relevant Health Department.

20. Students may appeal to the Associate Dean (Education) of the relevant College if they were not informed of the requirements on infectious disease status to complete their program.

21. A person may appeal to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on procedural grounds only against a decision made under clause 19.
Tests

22. The following list of tests is provided as an illustration of the type of tests that will be required. Students must refer to the policies and requirements of individual health facilities for specific and up to date testing requirements.

- Hepatitis B surface antigen and surface antibody
- Mantoux testing
- Varicella/zoster (Chicken Pox) antibody
- Hepatitis A total antibody (IgG/M)

23. In order for students to be aware of their own infectious status they are also recommended to undergo:

- HIV antibody test
- Hepatitis C antibody

24. Students with a positive surface antigen should arrange to have the following tests performed to determine the relative degree of infectivity:

- Hepatitis B e antigen; and
- Hepatitis B DNA (recommended for students coming from a population with a high prevalence of pre-core mutants)

25. Prophylactic BCG vaccination is not routinely recommended.

Immunisation Program

26. The following list of immunisations provides an example of recommended tests. Students undertaking placements in health facilities, particularly those conducting exposure-prone procedures should be immunised in accordance the requirements of individual health facilities.

- Hepatitis B: Students with no evidence of immunity to Hepatitis B must receive a full course of Hepatitis B vaccination.
- Varicella/Zoster (Chicken Pox): Students who do not have a definite recall of previous chicken pox must have serology performed. Those without immunity must be vaccinated.
- Tetanus/Diphtheria: Students who completed a childhood immunisation schedule will not routinely require a booster until age 50. However, students who elect to receive the pertussis vaccine (see below) will receive a booster, as this is a combined vaccine.
• Pertussis (whooping cough): Previous vaccination or pertussis illness does not provide lifelong prevention and students will be exposed in their clinical practice. An adult vaccination is now available in a combined Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis formulation.

• Hepatitis A: Students should consider this vaccine if they do not have serological evidence of immunity, especially if they are planning electives overseas or in remote Northern Australia.

• Measles/Mumps/Rubella: Students without documentary evidence of MMR vaccination in the past should receive a booster of this live attenuated vaccine.

• Influenza: It is recommended that students be vaccinated annually.