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Bloodborne Pathogens Policy

Applicants, employees and patients who self disclose a bloodborne disease will be shown the same consideration as non-infected individuals. Department policies and procedures require students and faculty treat all patients as if they are potentially infectious; and mandate the use of standard precautions when providing care for **all** patients in the dental hygiene clinic and at off-site rotations. Standard precautions require the utilization of very strict adherence to infection control procedures stipulated by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and OSHA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration). These precautions ensure a safe educational setting and work environment and not only minimize the transmission of bloodborne and infectious diseases during patient care but also the risk of injury. These procedures include proper handwashing technique, placement of personal protective barriers and protective barriers on equipment in the treatment room, as well as the proper handling and processing of contaminated instruments. These precautions are designed to protect both the clinician and the patient. If a patient presents with active tuberculosis that jeopardizes the health of others in the clinical setting the patient will be dismissed and asked to return once infectivity is diminished and confirmed with a chest x-ray.

All first semester freshmen and new employees receive written documentation on proper infection control protocols and are mandated to participate in an annual training session at the start of the second year to review these protocols. Students are evaluated on their compliance with these practices throughout the four semesters in the program. Any student and/or faculty member who does not abide by these protocols is subject to disciplinary action since it jeopardizes the safety of others in the clinical setting.

All information regarding the health status of an individual remains confidential and is protected by the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. This policy is strictly enforced. Patients are given a copy of the department's Notice of Privacy Policy as well as the Patients' Bill of Rights at their initial appointment to the clinic. After reading through these policies the patient is asked to sign a form indicating they have read and understand these two policies.

All newly admitted students are strongly encouraged to start the series of Hepatitis vaccinations as soon as they are admitted into the program since this is a timely process. A student can however begin classes without completion of this series if a waiver is signed acknowledging the student understands the risks of not completing the series prior to initiating patient care. The student is then advised that s/he must complete the series of three vaccinations prior to the start of the 2nd year. Failure to do so will prohibit the student from participation in activities at off campus clinical sites. To receive clearance to participate in clinical activities, the first semester freshman is required to show proof of a current physical and eye examination, written documentation from a physician verifying immunization or a titer for Rubella, Rubeola and Chicken Pox; and completion of a two-step Tb mantoux as recommended by the CDC. HIV testing is not a requirement for entry into our program.