

Statement on Learner Illness, Exposure and Patient Safety in Clinical Learning

Approved by: Curriculum Committee
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I. PURPOSE

The Doctor of Medicine (“*Program*”) or Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (“*School*”) at Western University is committed to the principle of a safe environment for learning, patient care and research.

This statement outlines expectations for all program learning when medical students (“*Learners*”) develop an illness that may impact patient care or safety, or are exposed to an environmental hazard. This Statement will apply to all Learners in School clinical learning. This statement does not deal with Learners and blood borne pathogens (BBP). For BBP’s, please consult the School Statement on Blood-Borne Pathogens.

This statement outlines the process of prevention, notice, intervention and accommodation for Learner illness or exposure to infection and/or environmental hazards in all program learning.

II. DEFINITIONS

Affiliates: Patient care hospitals, clinics or treatment facilities for student clinical learning

Exposure: An experience where a medical student in clinical learning is exposed to an infectious agent or environmental hazard

Learner: A medical student registered for clinical learning through the UME Program as a Western student or visiting student registered through the AFMC Student Portal

III. STATEMENT

The MD Program and Affiliates deliver medical education learning which includes clinical care and research. With this comes acknowledgement that Learners may be exposed to an infectious agent and/or environmental hazard, and may become ill as a result of this exposure.

Learners in clinical care education are not critical members of the health care team. As such, it is expected they will be excluded from clinical care that may involve exposure to serious life-threatening infectious agents (e.g. Ebola) and/or environmental hazards.

Learner absence due to illness and/or disability that results from exposure to an infection and/or environmental hazard will be accommodated, as per Program processes outlined in this document. This will apply to Program clinical and research experience necessary to achieve Progression; a Stage of an Enabling Competency; or Milestone of an Entrustable Professional Activity.

1. Education and communication of risk of exposure to infectious agent, developing a health issue impacting patients and/or environmental hazard to learners:

- i. Learners are required to complete, in advance of starting a learning experience, all Affiliate and/or School modules mandated by legislation and institutional policies. These typically will deal with workplace safety, transmissible diseases and environmental hazards. The Program or Affiliate will communicate to the Learner the requirement to complete these modules.
- ii. Learners will comply with the notification processes defined by the Affiliates for exposure to illnesses and environmental hazards.
- iii. The Program will provide curricular time for Learner education and training in advance of starting the Year 3 course "*Clerkship*" on workplace exposure to infectious agents and environmental hazards and prevention of subsequent disease.
- iv. Learners will receive counselling and referral to appropriate health professionals through the LEW Office if exposed to an infectious agent, developing a health issue that impacts patient care and/or environmental hazard.

2. Notification of risk of exposure to infectious agent and/or environmental hazard impacting clinical education.

a) The Program, Affiliates or School will:

- i. Notify learners electronically through the Program in collaboration with the Affiliate when there is a serious infectious disease outbreak that may result in suspension of clinical learning (e.g. SARS, Ebola).
- ii. Comply with the COFM Infectious Disease policy.
- iii. Grant an immediate medical leave of absence to the Learner who develops a personal health issue impacting patient care or safety
- iv. Support Learners utilizing the Learner Equity and Wellness Office (LEW), Western University, Program and School resources if exposed to an infectious

agent, resulting in a health issue impacting patient care and/or environmental hazard.

b) The Learner will:

- i. Take an immediate day leave if they are aware of a personal health issue that may or has impact on the learning environment, wellness or safety of others and/or safe patient care.
- ii. Inform the LEW or Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Office; and their Program course supervisor by electronic communication or in person if ill and absent due to risk of impacting safety of any patient, peer and/or other health professional secondary to personal illness and/or disability from exposure to an infectious agent and/or environmental hazard.
- iii. Disclose to their supervisor if they have accidentally exposed patients to a personal infectious illness in a clinical setting.
- iv. Have their condition reviewed and monitored by a physician (if necessary) after exposure.
- v. Submit documentation (if requested) to the UME and LEW Offices to clarify their health status and to develop an accommodated learning plan.
- vi. Comply with an accommodated learning plan, as developed by the Course Chair or lead for the Program clinical learning experience (i.e. Rotation Director) after return to studies.
- vii. Assume financial responsibility of exposure to infectious agents and/or environmental hazards by participating in the Western University student ancillary fees and registering all clinical learning with the Program to qualify for financial compensation by the Workplace Compensation Board of Ontario.

3. Accommodation for student health issues and/or environmental hazard exposure impacting safety of others in the learning environment and/or safe patient care

The School and Program will:

- i. Grant a medical Leave of Absence to a Learner with a personal health issue impacting the learning environment, wellness or safety of others and/or safe patient care.
- ii. Maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible regarding any information disclosed by or about Learners with illness and/or disability from exposure to an infectious agent and/or environmental hazard.
- iii. Disclose information only with Learner consent.
- iv. Create an accommodated learning plan in accordance with Program policy, for a Learner who cannot complete mandatory Program clinical learning due to illness and/or disability from exposure to an infectious agent and/or environmental hazard.
- v. Advise the Learner's supervising physicians of the accommodations required for the Learner.
- vi. Provide the accommodated learning plan to the Learner's supervisor and educate the supervisor (if necessary) so that they understand the plan and how it should be implemented.
- vii. Provide, in collaboration with the Affiliate, all supports for clinical instructors in meeting a Learner's accommodated learning plan.
- viii. Monitor Learner compliance with all accommodated learning plans.

- ix. Request withdrawal from studies for Learners for severe Professionalism actions that breach the safety the learning environment, wellness or safety of others and/or safe patient care if recommended by a review of the Program Competence Committee
- x. Allow for appeal of decisions of accommodation or withdrawal in accordance with the Program Appeals policy.