

SCREENING HEALTH CARE WORKERS FOR BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES: **(HEPATITIS B & C & HIV)**

In 2007 the Department of Health published "*Health Clearance for Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV: New Healthcare Workers*". This guidance recommends that all new healthcare workers (which applies to Nursing and Midwifery Students entering into training) have checks for Tuberculosis, disease/ immunity and are offered Hepatitis B immunisation, with post-immunisation testing of response and the **offer** of tests for Hepatitis C and HIV. These standard health clearance checks should be completed either prior or on acceptance (depending on the course involved).

The guidance goes on to advise that for new healthcare workers who perform exposure prone procedures (EPPs) additional health clearance should also be undertaken. Additional health clearance means being non-infectious for HIV (antibody negative) Hepatitis B (surface antigen negative or, if positive, e-antigen negative with a viral load of 10^3 genome equivalent/ml or less) and Hepatitis C (antibody negative or, if positive, negative for Hepatitis C RNA).

Exposure prone procedures (EPPs) are those invasive procedures where there is a risk that injury to the worker/student may result in the exposure of the patient's open tissues to the blood of the worker/ student. These include procedures where the worker's/student's gloved hands may be in contact with sharp instruments, needle tips or sharp tissues (e.g. spicules of bone or teeth) inside a patient's open body cavity, wound or confined anatomical space where the hands or finger tips may not be completely visible at all times). Performance of EPPs is not a requirement of the curriculum for pre-registration student nurse training but aspects of such work may be considered as a core competence for Midwifery training.

Procedure for Screening at The University of Manchester

The University of Manchester is committed to protecting students/staff and their patients from blood borne viruses (BBV's) and preserving confidential personal records for Staff and Students. The vast majority of nursing and medical duties do not pose a risk of infection to or from patients, provided that normal infection control precautions are observed.

Screening is only undertaken with informed consent and is in line with national guidance. Staff who test positive for a blood borne virus will receive confidential, expert advice from the Occupational Health Staff and where necessary and appropriate will be referred through their General Practitioner to the Specialist Services for further advice and possibly treatment. Each case will be considered individually in consultation with the Specialist Services and where possible advice will be given regarding reasonable adjustments which may include restrictions from certain areas of work e.g. restrict from EPPs.

In the case of prospective **Midwifery Students** we require that they have screening (normally undertaken by the Occupational Health Service) for blood borne viruses prior to registration. This is because some of the core competencies of work as a Midwife involves work which could be considered to involve exposure prone procedures.

We recognise that such tests can cause some anxiety. In the event that you have any significant concerns about your personal risk we recommend you to speak with your General Practitioner or the Local Genitourinary Clinic or contact the Occupational Health Service for a confidential discussion.

Please follow the links below to key related Department of Health Guidance:-

1. Health clearance for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV: New Healthcare workers
http://www.bna.co.uk/documents/2011/Occ_Health_Current_requirements.pdf
2. The Management of HIV infected Healthcare Workers who perform exposure prone procedures: updated guidance, January 2014.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/333018/Management_of_HIV_infected_Healthcare_Workers_guidance_January_2014.pdf