

ELEMENT VI

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN HEALTHCARE WORKERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of course work or training on this element, the learner will be able to:

- Recognize the role of occupational health strategies in protecting healthcare workers and patients;
- Recognize non-specific disease findings that should prompt evaluation of healthcare workers;
- Identify occupational health strategies for preventing transmission of bloodborne pathogens and other communicable diseases in healthcare workers; and
- Identify resources for evaluation of healthcare workers infected with HIV, HBV, and/or HCV.

DEFINITIONS

Infectious Disease: A clinically manifest disease of humans or animals resulting from an infection.

Communicable Disease: An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that arises through transmission of that agent from an infected person, animal, or inanimate source to a susceptible host.

Occupational Health Strategies: As applied to infection control, a set of activities intended to assess, prevent, and control infections and communicable diseases in healthcare workers.

CONTENT OUTLINE

I. Pre-placement and periodic health assessments.

- A. Immunization/screening programs (e.g., measles, mumps, rubella, varicella, hepatitis B, annual influenza, any other recommended or mandated requirements);
- B. Tuberculosis screening:
 1. Symptoms evaluation.
 2. Tuberculin skin testing as required by regulation.

- C. Screening for other communicable diseases:
 - 1. Health assessments (history and physicals).
- D. Symptoms requiring immediate evaluation by a licensed medical professional and possible restriction from patient care activities and return to work clearance:
 - 1. Fever;
 - 2. Cough;
 - 3. Rash;
 - 4. Vesicular lesions;
 - 5. Draining wounds;
 - 6. Vomiting;
 - 7. Diarrhea.

II. Management strategies for potentially communicable conditions.

- A. Appropriate evaluation and treatment;
- B. Limiting contact with susceptibles;
- C. Furlough until noninfectious.

III. Specific occupational health strategies for prevention and control of bloodborne pathogen transmission.

- A. Healthcare worker exposure risk education:
 - 1. Potential agents (HBV, HCV, HIV);
 - 2. Prevention strategies:
 - a. HBV vaccination (including safety, efficacy, components, and recommendations for use);
 - b. Hand hygiene;
 - c. Appropriate PPE and barrier precautions;
 - d. Sharps safety;
 - e. Standard and Universal Precautions.

IV. Post-exposure evaluation and management.

- A. Bloodborne pathogens:
 - 1. Prompt evaluation by licensed medical professional;
 - 2. Risk assessment in occupational exposures;
 - 3. Recommendations for approaching source patient and healthcare worker

evaluations;

4. Recommendations for post-exposure prophylaxis emphasizing the most current NYSDOH and CDC guidelines;
5. Post-exposure management of patients or other healthcare workers when exposure source is a healthcare worker:
 - a. Professional obligation to inform patients exposed to a healthcare worker's blood or other potentially infectious material.

B. Airborne or droplet pathogen:

1. Tuberculosis:
 - a. Recommendations for post-exposure prophylaxis emphasizing the most current New York State guidelines for post-exposure prophylaxis.
2. Varicella, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Pertussis:
 - a. Consult the most current Federal, State, or local requirements for post-exposure evaluation and management.

C. Notification of healthcare workers/public.

V. Evaluation of healthcare workers infected with HIV, HBV and/or HCV or other bloodborne pathogens.

A. Review New York State Department of Health Policy on HIV testing of healthcare workers.

B. Criteria for evaluating infected health care workers for risk of transmission:

1. Nature and scope of professional practice;
2. Techniques used in performance of procedures that may pose a transmission risk to patients;
3. Assessed compliance with infection control standards;
4. Presence of weeping dermatitis, draining or open skin wounds;
5. Overall health:
 - a. Physical health;
 - b. Cognitive status.
6. Expert panels for evaluation of healthcare workers infected with bloodborne pathogens.