Policy on Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards

I. POLICY
Students must receive education and training regarding the methods of prevention of exposure to infectious and environmental hazards. Instruction will include the use of adequate barrier protection (gloves, safety glasses, mask, gown, etc.), sharps precautions, and hand washing/hygiene, as well as other relevant health care worker standards put forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Students are required to complete this training at the start of their medical education and at the start of each curriculum year.

Post-exposure, students are instructed to seek medical care immediately and to report the incident to their immediate supervisor and the Office of Student Affairs. Specific procedures for care and treatment after exposure is described in the Procedure on Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards.

Students are required to maintain active health insurance to cover health needs related to such exposures.

II. PURPOSE
WHSOM seeks to prevent medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards though education and use of appropriate procedures and engineering controls, and provides prophylaxis therapy if students are exposed to infectious agents.

III. SCOPE
This policy applies to:
• Medical students

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)
• Office of Student Affairs
V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
• Procedure on Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards

VI. REFERENCES
LCME Element 12.8: Student Exposure Policies/Procedures: A medical school has policies in place that effectively address medical student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards, including the following:
● The education of medical students about methods of prevention
● The procedures for care and treatment after exposure, including a definition of financial responsibility
● The effects of infectious and environmental disease or disability on medical student learning activities
All registered medical students (including visiting students) are informed of these policies before undertaking any educational activities that would place them at risk.

VII. APPROVALS
Dean, School of Medicine
Procedure on Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards

Education and Training
Annually, all medical students are required to complete the online module on Standard Precautions and Bloodborne Pathogens. First year students must also participate in the infection control session within the Orientation Program. Third year students must also participate in the infection control session within the Preclerkship Course. Students are not able to begin or continue clinical activities until they have achieved satisfactory completion of the annual module training. This includes shadowing and standardized patient activities.

Mask Fit Testing
All students are required to undergo N95 respirator (mask) fit testing at the beginning of years 1 and 3.

Care and Treatment after Exposure
Students who have been exposed to a blood-borne or airborne pathogen or other infectious or environmental hazard should seek care immediately after the exposure.

If you experience a needle stick, sharps injury, blood/other body fluid exposure or any other hazardous exposure, immediately follow these steps:

1. Wash needlesticks/cuts with soap and water.
2. Flush splashes to the nose, mouth, or skin with water.
3. Irrigate eyes with clean water, saline, or sterile irrigants.
4. Report the incident to your supervisor (attending or resident physician).
5. Go for immediate treatment:

   If it occurs at a hospital facility, go to that hospital’s Emergency Department.
   
   If it occurs at an ambulatory site: go to the nearest Emergency Department. If you are uncertain about where to go, call the 24-hour exposure hotline and go to the ED location as directed by the hotline. The phone number is xxx-xxx-xxxx.
   
   If it occurs at the medical school campus, go to:
   
   Student Health Service, open 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, weekdays
   Ground Floor, Room 100,
   At any times when Student Health Service is closed, go to the Emergency Department at Northwest Regional Hospital (or any Emergency Department of your choice).
6. If the injury is severe and requires sutures or other intensive medical attention, go directly to the Emergency Department regardless of day or time.

7. After your treatment, call Student Health Service at xxx-xxx-xxxx to report the incident and receive counseling.

8. After your treatment, call or visit the Office of Student Affairs at xxx-xxx-xxxx to report the incident.

If while a student is being treated at any ED site the staff have questions about treatment or follow-up, they may call the 24-hour exposure hotline where they will be quickly connected to a physician who can provide expert advice on treatment and on follow-up treatment arrangements. The number is xxx-xxx-xxxx.

**Follow-up Care**

After the initial treatment at SHS or an emergency department, students are expected to receive follow-up care from their Primary Care Physician or Student Health Services.

**Costs**

If a student must be treated at an Emergency Department, they will be expected to provide their health insurance information. Their insurance will be billed for the cost of the visit. Initial treatment for any exposure is carried out at no charge to the student for any costs over and above insurance coverage. Students must promptly report the exposure and emergency department visit to the Office of Student Affairs to enable this assistance with any costs that are not covered by their insurance.

Students will be responsible to use their health insurance for any prescribed follow-up care.

**Exposures in Research Laboratories**

These procedures also apply to research laboratory exposures.

Students with exposures in research settings should follow these general guidelines, supplemented by any specific procedures relevant to the type of exposure in their research site (e.g., special procedures for treatment after an exposure from a non-human primate source). Students should promptly report exposures to their laboratory supervisor who can assist with obtaining treatment. If the supervisor is not available, students should obtain treatment as outlined in step 5, above.