

Guidance on Exposure Prone Procedures for Medical and Dental Students

Testing For Blood Borne Virus Infections Exposure Prone Procedures (EPP)

Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV are chronic viral infections where the virus is usually present in the bloodstream. There are some circumstances in health care (including medicine and dentistry) in which the infection can be transmitted from a health care worker to a patient. If an infected worker cuts or injures themselves whilst carrying out EPPs, blood from this injury can get into the patient's body and cause infection. In all 3 of these infections, a person who is infected may show no signs of illness and be unaware that they are infected. To avoid any risk to patients, anyone who will be involved in surgery, dentistry and certain other procedures now has to be tested for signs of infection before they can begin such work.

What are exposure prone procedures? 'Exposure prone procedures are those where there is a risk of injury to the worker, which may result in the exposure of the patients' open tissues to the blood of the worker. These procedures include those where the worker's gloved hands may be in contact with sharp instruments, needle tips and sharp tissues (spicules of bone or teeth) inside a patient's open body cavity, wound or confined anatomical space where the hands or fingertips may not be completely visible at all times.' For example, surgery and dentistry

Will I be participating in EPPs' during training? *All dental courses involve EPPs and all students require EPP clearance.* The practical skills required of medical students to obtain provisional General Medical Council (GMC) registration, or a pre-registration house officer to obtain full GMC registration, do not include EPPs. However, medical students may benefit from undertaking EPPs or may wish to do so. Clearance to participate in EPP work will be offered to medical students by Occupational Health Service on commencing their studies

What is EPP Clearance? A series of blood tests are required including HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B. More information regarding these tests are given on commencing your studies.

Blood Test Results for EPP clearance. Blood results must come from an identified sample and be validated by a UK Occupational Health Department. Medical students will be offered the opportunity to have these blood tests at QMUL Occupational Health Service, Mile End. GP blood test results cannot be accepted for EPP clearance

More information. You can get general details about the infections, and screening tests for them from the web sites listed below. If you have any outstanding questions or concerns you can talk these through with an OH Adviser

- Information on Hepatitis C: www.hepcuk.info
- Information on Hepatitis B: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hepatitis-B/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- Information on HIV & HIV tests: www.tht.org.uk/informationresources
- The specific page on HIV testing is: www.tht.org.uk/informationresources/hivandaids/testingforhiv/
- Further information regarding health clearance for healthcare workers is also available on the Department of Health website: www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm

Following EPP clearance and participation in EPP work, any medical or dental student has an on-going ethical duty to seek confidential professional advice if subsequently exposed to infection with a blood borne virus, in whatever circumstances. Failure to do so may breach duty of care to patients