

GEORGIA HIGHLANDS COLLEGE DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS/INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

The Dental Hygiene program at Georgia Highlands College is committed to addressing issues related to bloodborne pathogens, such as Human Immunodeficiency (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) in order to protect patients, students, faculty and staff, as well as protect the rights of individuals who may have a bloodborne infectious disease. Students are expected to treat all patients assigned and as a result, the potential exists for transmission of bloodborne and other infectious diseases during patient care services. An individualized treatment plan is developed for every patient. The decision to treat patients with a medical condition, infectious or non-infectious, will be handled on a case by case basis depending on the ability of the student to deliver the appropriate standards of care, the approval of the patient's physician and the stability of the condition. Patients will be referred appropriately if their dental needs are greater than the educational clinic at Georgia Highlands College can provide.

The purpose of the department's Bloodborne Pathogen Policy (BPP) and Exposure Control Plan (ECP) is to minimize the risk of transmission of bloodborne pathogens, as well as, minimize the risk to other environmental hazards. Policies will be reviewed annually and changes recommended as appropriate.

Admission/Employment

Georgia Highlands Dental Hygiene program will not discriminate against employees, students, applicants for admission or patients based solely on health status. Applicants who test positive for infectious disease or who are carriers of an infectious disease should seek counsel from their physician and the program director prior to application.

Immunizations

The risk for exposure to Hepatitis B is higher for Dental Health Care Providers (DHCP) than the general population, therefore, it is recommended that students start the vaccination process for Hepatitis B as soon as they receive acceptance into the program. A comprehensive medical history, physical examination, dental exam, negative Tuberculin (Mantoux) skin test (negative chest x-ray if positive or contraindicated) and immunizations are additional requirements outlined in the ECP.

HIV testing

Testing of DHCP and students for HIV is not required by the Department of Dental Hygiene. However, health care workers and students who perform exposure-prone procedures on patients are encouraged to be tested voluntarily in order to know their HIV status.

Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens

DHCP or students who are exposed to a bloodborne pathogen in the course of their clinical care are expected to follow the procedures set forth in the ECP. If a student should be exposed to a patient's body fluids in a manner that may transmit a bloodborne or infectious disease, the patient will be asked to be tested for disease.

Restriction of Activity

The Dental Hygiene program will follow CDC suggested work restrictions for health-care personnel infected with or exposed to major infectious diseases in the dental hygiene clinic. A copy of work restriction recommendations is found within the ECP. A student will be allowed to continue his/her education as long as their medical condition permits patient care and other individual's health are not jeopardized or at risk. Faculty, staff, students and patients will be managed no differently than standard procedures indicate unless at some point in their disease state, they have a negative impact on the health of others they come in contact with or are unable to adequately fulfill their responsibilities. In the event that an individual poses a risk to others, the Dental Hygiene program director will assist the individual in obtaining counseling and advisement regarding their health and education.

Confidentiality

All information regarding the health status of an individual is confidential and protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1994 and the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.

Bloodborne Pathogen & Infection Control Training

The Dental Hygiene program complies with all local, state and federal infection control policies including the application of Standard Precautions as stipulated by current CDC Guidelines. Written policies and instruction on infection control protocol to minimize the risk of disease transmission is provided in courses throughout the curriculum, at yearly required bloodborne pathogen training sessions and through documents such as the Dental Hygiene Program Manual and the Department of Dental Hygiene Exposure Control Plan. Compliance of safety practices is evaluated throughout the students' clinical experience to ensure a safe educational and work environment. The Department of Dental Hygiene Exposure Control Plan which outlines infection control protocol is available to all applicants upon request.

Enforcement of Practice Limitations or Modifications

Any student or DHCP who engages in unsafe and/or careless clinical practices, which create risks to the health of patients, employees, or students shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the dental hygiene program. When such actions are brought to the attention of the Department Chair, the students or DHCP may be suspended immediately from all patient care activities pending a full investigation of the matter.

Environmental Hazards

Environmental hazards of dental hygiene practice include: disorders associated with repetitive activities, exposure to high decibel sounds, exposure to hazardous chemicals or substances, accidental injury, exposure to radiation and allergic reactions to latex or other chemical agents.

Communication of Bloodborne Pathogen Policy to Dental Hygiene Clinic Patients

Patients of the Dental Hygiene Clinic are informed of Bloodborne pathogen policies at their initial appointments in the clinic. Patients are asked to read the Patients' Rights Brochure which includes the "Patient Responsibilities" and "Your rights as a Patient" The patients are asked to sign the Dental Hygiene Process of Care Plan which acknowledges they have received and read this information. The GHC (Georgia Highlands College) Bloodborne Pathogens Policy and Exposure Control Plan are available upon request in the dental hygiene clinic.