Bloodborne Pathogens Procedure Statement

The Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Program 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 required to treat all patients assigned and as a result, the potential exists for transmission of bloodborne and other infectious diseases during patient care services. The purpose of this bloodborne pathogens statement 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.

The Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic is a safe place to provide and receive dental care. Current and generally accepted epidemiological information supports the conclusion that there is no significant risk of contracting bloodborne diseases through the provision of dental treatment when appropriate infection control procedures are followed. A key element of infection control is the concept of standard precautions, introduced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a means to reduce the risk of bloodborne pathogen transmission (e.g., the Human Immunodeficiency Virus [HIV], Hepatitis B Virus [HBV] and others) in healthcare settings. The primary principle behind standard precautions centers on the premise that medical history and examination cannot reliably identify all patients infected with bloodborne pathogens. All patients, therefore, must be regarded as potentially infectious. As such, applying standard precautions requires that infection control procedures (e.g., HBV vaccination, routine handwashing, use of protective barriers and care in the use and disposal of needles and other sharp instruments) are used for every patient.

Admission/Employment
The Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Program will not discriminate against faculty, staff, 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, negative Tuberculin (Mantoux) skin test (negative chest x-ray if positive), and additional immunizations as stated in the Montgomery County Community College Catalog must also be completed.

HIV Testing
Testing of DHCP and students for HIV is not required by the Dental Hygiene Program. 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.
Obligation to Report
A student will be allowed to continue his/her education as long as their medical condition permits patient care and other individual’s health is not jeopardized or at risk. In the event that an individual poses a risk to others, the Director, Dental Hygiene Program 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.

Standard Precautions
Standard precautions involve the use of protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, masks, and protective eyewear, which can reduce the risk of exposure of the DHCP’s skin or mucous membranes to potentially infectious materials. Personal protective equipment for faculty and students is removed before leaving the Clinic and disposed of properly by the institution. In addition, it is recommended that all faculty and students take precautions to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels, and other sharp instruments or devices. In the event of injury, the Health Sciences Division’s Bloodborne Exposure Procedure is located in the Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Program Clinic Handbook.

Bloodborne Pathogen and Infection Control Training
The Montgomery County Community College 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. Compliance with safety practices is evaluated throughout the students’ clinical experience to ensure a safe educational and work environment. Infection control procedures are outlined in the Dental Hygiene Program Clinic Handbook and are reviewed annually.

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. When such actions are brought to the attention of the Director, Dental Hygiene Program, the students or DHCP may be suspended immediately from all patient care activities pending a full investigation of the matter.

Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens
Faculty, staff, students, and patients who are exposed to a bloodborne pathogen in the course of their clinical care are referred to the Health Sciences Division’s Bloodborne Exposure Procedure located in the Dental Hygiene Program Clinic Handbook.

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.
Dental Hygiene Services
Patients infected with bloodborne pathogens can be safely treated in the Dental Hygiene Clinic. Current epidemiological evidence indicates that there is no significant risk of contracting bloodborne diseases through the provision of dental treatment when Standard Precautions are routinely followed. Therefore, all patients regardless of HIV, HBV, or HCV status will be provided dental hygiene services in the Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic. Standard precautions for all patients will be followed.

Communication of Bloodborne Pathogen Policy to Dental Hygiene Clinic Patients
The Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Program’s Bloodborne Procedure is available upon request. Patients are asked to read and sign the Informed Consent form prior to receipt of any dental services in the Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic.

Confidentiality
All information regarding the health status of an individual is confidential and is considered protected health information used only for treatment. A privacy notice explaining the use of health information is provided to patients at the initial appointment. The Montgomery County Community College Dental Hygiene Program is HIPAA compliant.

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