



**RCSI**

# **RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus Policy AY 2023-24**

**Policy / Regulation History**

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## 1. PURPOSE

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is aware of its over-riding duty of care to the public with whom students are in close contact. In the rare circumstances where a student is shown to have a blood borne virus and is infectious, RCSI will consider all appropriate measures and will do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of the student in question, in accordance with statutory requirements. RCSI is obliged to ensure that we take reasonable and appropriate measures not only to safeguard the students and their colleagues, but also patients and members of the public. Safeguarding these groups is of paramount importance.

This document is intended to ensure that all students are informed of the policy and procedures being applied by RCSI regarding blood borne viruses. This policy must be read carefully by students who must ensure that they make themselves fully aware of the contents. Failure to adhere to the provisions of this policy could, ultimately, result in a student being excluded from RCSI.

The transmission of blood borne pathogens within a healthcare setting has become a matter of increasing public concern and interest over a number of years. This policy is designed to protect students from acquiring a blood borne virus. In the rare instance where a student has acquired a blood borne virus, this policy will detail how to support and manage that student. This will be undertaken with acknowledgement that the protection of patients and the public is paramount.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

Students must carefully read the ***“Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students”*** of the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Bahrain, available on the VLE. Students must also carefully read the policy on **General Health, Infectious Diseases Screening and Vaccination of RCSI Bahrain students**, available on the VLE.

## 3. APPLICATION

This policy is applicable to all RCSI Bahrain students.

## 4. POLICY CONTENT

### 4.1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The prerequisite of good practice in any healthcare setting is the careful observation of basic hygiene and proper infection control procedures by all students. For this reason, particular attention is drawn to the avoidance of sharps/needle stick injuries, including the value of double gloving preoperatively where appropriate and the covering of skin lesions with waterproof dressings. Any student with exudative or weeping skin lesions must avoid direct patient contact and must not handle devices or equipment used during invasive procedures. RCSI students must adhere to all infection control policies that are in place within the hospitals/institutions where they are based.

### 4.2. RISK OF TRANSMISSION OF BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES TO PATIENTS

#### Hepatitis B

The transmission of hepatitis B Virus (HBV) from infected healthcare workers to patients has been well documented and the factors which predispose to transmission have been identified. They include the performance of invasive procedures (surgical or dental) and a high level of infectivity in the healthcare worker (HBe antigen positive or pre-core mutant positive).

## **Hepatitis C**

The major source of transmission of hepatitis C is by exposure to infected blood and body fluids. Cases involving transmission of hepatitis C from surgeons to patients have been well documented and have arisen in the context of cardiothoracic surgery, open heart surgery, gynaecological surgery and anaesthesiology.

### **HIV Transmission**

Studies have shown that the HIV virus can be transmitted to patients during both dental and surgical procedures.

## **4.3. EXPOSURE PRONE PROCEDURES**

Most contact between healthcare workers, students and patients does not involve the possibility of blood-to-blood contact and therefore carries low risk for transmission of blood borne pathogens. Provided infection control procedures are adhered to, Exposure Prone Procedures (EPP) are the only procedures associated with a risk of transmission of blood borne pathogens to patients.

EPPs are defined as procedures which involve surgical entry into tissues, cavities or organs or repair of major traumatic injuries, caesarean deliveries or other obstetric procedures during which sharp instruments are used such as perineal repair after a vaginal delivery; the manipulation, cutting or removal of any oral or perioral tissues including tooth structure, during which bleeding may occur.

In addition, EPPs relate to situations where the student or surgeon's hands (whether gloved or not) may be in contact with sharp instruments, needle tips or sharp tissues (spicules of bone or teeth), inside a patient's open body cavity, wound or confined anatomical space, and where the hands or fingertips may not be completely visible at all times.

Should the opportunity to electively participate in an EPP arise, students may not be able to participate unless they have recently been tested and shown not to carry a blood-borne virus.

## **4.4. SCREENING OF STUDENTS**

It is the duty of all healthcare workers, including students, to protect themselves and their patients from disease. This includes being tested and immunised against hepatitis B if appropriate, and strictly adhering to standard precautions and codes of practice. There is a moral and legal obligation on both health service providers and healthcare workers to ensure the protection of workers and patients alike.

Accordingly, there is an ethical duty for healthcare professionals to protect patients from harm. A healthcare professional or student who knowingly puts patients at risk and who infects patients may be subject to a medical negligence case for breach of standard of care or indeed to prosecution for criminal negligence.

## **4.5. RCSI REQUIREMENTS**

### **Prior to new student registration**

All students must undergo Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV screening, along with other communicable diseases screening, prior to joining the university in accordance with the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Bahrain regulations.

### **Within six weeks after registration**

- Students who are holding Bahraini passports who have completed their screening at a health centre in Bahrain **will not** need to have **repeat screening** after registration.
- Students who are holding a passport from a Gulf Cooperation (GCC) country who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country will **not** need to have repeat screening after registration.
- Students who are residents of certain Gulf Cooperation (GCC) countries who have completed their initial medical screening at a Ministry of Health facility in that country, which is accepted by the Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Health, **may not** need to have repeat screening after registration. The SH&WU will advise if repeat screening is required.
- All other students **will need to have** repeat medical screening after registration. The SH&WU will make the necessary arrangements for the screening and inform the student accordingly. There is a cost for this screening, which will be communicated to students upon registration. Students are responsible for paying their medical screening fees directly to the clinic providing the screening. Results are provided to the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit for follow up as necessary (see RCSI Bahrain Blood Borne Virus Policy).

### **During the School of Medicine programme**

Screening will be repeated for all medical students prior to commencing their clinical rotations in Year 3.

Failure to adhere to any of these requirements will result in the student being discontinued from RCSI Bahrain.

## **4.6. MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS INFECTED WITH SPECIFIC BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES**

If a student tests positive for a blood borne virus, Bahraini students' cases will be referred to the Medical Commission for consideration of fitness to join or remain on the program. Non-Bahraini students who test positive for HIV, Hepatitis C or Hepatitis B will not be eligible to join RCSI or remain on the program in line with the MOH policy for Immunization and Infectious Disease Screening for Medical and Nursing Students. The Disease Control Section of the Ministry of Health will be notified of the positive result.

### **Hepatitis B**

Students will be screened for Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg). If the result of the (HBsAg) test is positive, Bahraini students' case will be referred to the Medical Commission for consideration. Non-Bahraini students will not be eligible to join the university or remain in their programme. Non-Bahraini students will be repatriated. The university will inform the Disease Control Section of the Ministry of Health of the positive results.

The vaccination for Hepatitis B consists of a series of 3 doses. The second dose should be administered one month after the first dose, and the third should be administered 6 months after the first one. Testing for the surface antibody to Hepatitis B (anti-HBs) should be done at least one month after the vaccine series is completed. Applicants who have not been previously vaccinated for Hepatitis B should begin this vaccination process no later than the February 1st prior to possible registration. Students who have been vaccinated for Hepatitis B must provide the vaccination dates on the Immunization Report (see Appendix 1) prior to joining the university.

An HBsAg test is required before joining the university. If a student is HBsAg negative, three doses of vaccine should be given and the Anti HBs should be carried out within 6 months after completing the third dose, preferably after one month. If the antibodies to the Hepatitis B surface antigen test are **negative**, the student must begin a second Hepatitis B vaccine series and repeat the Hepatitis B surface antibody test (anti-HBs). If a student continues to be non-immune after a second series of Hepatitis B vaccine, he/she will be considered to be a “non-responder” and will be referred to the appropriate specialist and receive healthcare counselling.

A safe and effective vaccine is available for the protection of students and others from infection with hepatitis B virus. All healthcare personnel (which includes students) who have direct contact with blood or body fluids, or with patient tissue and who are therefore at risk of acquiring hepatitis B occupationally, must have their anti-HBs status established. In circumstances where the contact may also involve undertaking or assisting in exposure prone procedures, testing must also include anti-HBsAg (hepatitis B surface antigen).

All students who assist in exposure prone procedures must be immunized against hepatitis B virus, unless immunity to hepatitis B virus as a result of natural infection or previous immunization has been established or the vaccine is contraindicated. Students who are unwilling to be vaccinated may be discontinued from RCSI.

### **HIV and Hepatitis C**

If the result of any Hepatitis C or HIV test is positive, Bahraini students' case will be referred to the Medical Commission for consideration. Non-Bahraini students will not be eligible to join the university or remain in their programme. Non-Bahraini students will be repatriated. The university will inform the Disease Control Section of the Ministry of Health of the positive results.

At present there are no vaccines that protect health-care workers from hepatitis C virus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Students who are unwilling to be tested for hepatitis C virus must be aware that they may face discontinuation from RCSI.

In order to ensure personal and public safety it is incumbent on all students to take steps to ensure that they do not put themselves at risk from infection by a blood borne virus in their private lives.

Any student who suspects that he or she may have been exposed to hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV must notify the SH&WU for advice and support. The student must also cooperate with any look-back exercise deemed necessary and seek professional advice, including testing, if appropriate. Students who fail to notify the appropriate authorities if they suspect that they have been exposed to a BBV may face discontinuation from RCSI.

### **4.7. STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

- First “do no harm.”
- Learn and practice standard and additional infection control precautions. This applies to all patients regardless of their diagnoses.
- Ensure that you are protected from infection with the vaccine-preventable diseases associated with health care.
- To take measures to prevent transmission of acute infectious diseases from yourself to others.
- To know your infectious status for hepatitis B and hepatitis C. This involves testing before commencing studies and periodic testing, as long as the risk of exposure to these viruses (through occupation or other activities) continues.
- You should seek post-exposure follow-up if exposed to an infected patient's blood.
- You must report an event of patient exposure to your blood so that both you and the patient can be tested. The source of exposure will not be revealed to the patient.
- You must undergo testing for blood borne pathogens as requested by the hospital, if implicated in patient infections.

## **4.8. CONFIDENTIALITY**

RCSI will maintain the confidentiality of a student's medical records as far as possible.

## **4.9. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES**

- 4.9.1. All RCSI Bahrain students must read and agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this policy. RCSI has an over-riding duty of care to the public with whom medical and nursing students are in close contact. RCSI is obliged to ensure that reasonable and appropriate measures are taken to safeguard students, their colleagues, patients and members of the public. Safeguarding these groups is of paramount importance.
- 4.9.2. Prior to joining the university all students will undergo blood borne viruses screening. Repeat screening may be required within six weeks of joining the university, according to point 5. above. Year 3 School of Medicine students will be rescreened prior to starting clinical rotations. This is organized and followed up by the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit. All students will be screened for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV, tuberculosis and vaccinated for hepatitis B and any other infectious diseases as required by the Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Health Regulations.
- 4.9.3. For students requiring vaccination for hepatitis B, it is essential that the treatment course is completed and that the antibody levels post vaccination are assessed prior to clinical practice. An anti-HBs level of 10miu/ml or greater is considered to reflect an adequate response to the vaccine and confer immunity. In order to ensure both student and patient safety, students will not be allowed to be involved in EPPs until RCSI has received satisfactory proof of hepatitis B immunity and that their infection status for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV is clear.
- 4.9.4. Only students who have adequate antibody levels for hepatitis B and confirmation of being negative for hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV will be permitted to commence their clinical attachment.
- 4.9.5. Students who do not comply with screening and vaccination requirements may be discontinued by the university.
- 4.9.6. If during repeat screening a student is found to be positive for a BBV, namely hepatitis, hepatitis B and or HIV, the university has an obligation to disclose this information to the Disease Control Section, Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Bahrain according to the Ministry of Health's regulations. The student will be supported by the SH&WU.

## **5. ANNEXES**

Template: New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Diseases Screening form and Appendix

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students. Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Bahrain.

Policy on General Health, Infectious Diseases Screening and Vaccination of RCSI Bahrain students.

RCSI Bahrain Code of Conduct



## Appendix 1

### Template: New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Diseases Screening Form

#### RCSI Bahrain Student Health & Wellbeing Unit New Applicants Immunizations and Infectious Disease Screening Form

In compliance with the Ministry of Health, “***Policy for Immunization and Infectious Diseases Screening for Medical, Dental, Nursing, and Physiotherapy Students***” (Policy attached) all new applicants must submit evidence of having completed the Infectious Disease Screening identified below (Section A) and complete the Immunization Report (Appendix 1). **Please note that all new students will need to provide proof of completing the Covid-19 Vaccine.**

#### **International Applicants**

Should complete the screening identified below (Section A) and get (Appendix 1) completed by their health care provider. It is mandatory that international applicants who require rescreening are re-screened for Infectious Diseases once they arrive in Bahrain. The Student Health & Wellbeing Unit will advise of the requirement for rescreening and arrange this following registration.

#### **Applicants from the GCC**

Should complete their Infectious Disease Screening identified below (Section A) at a Ministry of Health Facility in their country of origin. **Results should be recorded on a medical examination certificate, which clearly states the applicant’s fitness and stamped by the health authority.** Their health care provider should complete Appendix 1.

#### **Bahraini Applicants**

Bahraini applicants should complete their Infectious Disease Screening at their Local Health Centre and results should be recorded on the “Medical Examination Certificate – Studies Fitness”. Their health care provider should also complete Appendix 1 at the local health centre.

#### **Section A. Infectious Disease Screening Required:**

- Hepatitis B Surface Antigen
- Hepatitis B Antibodies
- Hepatitis C Antibody
- HIV 1 & 2
- Tuberculosis Screening (PPD skin test)
- Chest X Ray

The Infectious Disease Screening and immunization report should be submitted to [link](#) by **31 August 2023**. **Please note: Infectious Disease Screening completed more than 3 months from registration will not be accepted.**

Applicants should complete the required vaccinations listed in (Appendix 1) before registration. Once enrolled in RCSI Bahrain, Student Health & Wellbeing Unit will arrange for vaccines to be updated accordingly.

If you have any questions or need further advice, please contact [Student-health@rcsi-mub.com](mailto:Student-health@rcsi-mub.com)

## Appendix 2

### RCSI Bahrain Student Health & Wellbeing Unit Immunization Report

This report should be completed by a licensed health care provider  
e.g. GP, Practice Nurse, Occupational Health professional etc.

Name:	DOB:
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Vaccine	Date	Result
MMR Vaccine	MMR 1 <sup>st</sup>	
	MMR 2 <sup>nd</sup>	
Hepatitis B Vaccine	Hepatitis B 1 <sup>st</sup>	
	Hepatitis B 2 <sup>nd</sup>	
	Hepatitis B 3 <sup>rd</sup>	
	Hepatitis B Surface Antibody Level	_____mIU/ml
Secondary Hepatitis B series ( <i>for non-responders</i> )	Hepatitis B 4 <sup>th</sup>	
	Hepatitis B 5 <sup>th</sup>	
	Hepatitis B 6 <sup>th</sup>	
	Hepatitis B Surface Antibody Level	_____mIU/ml
Hepatitis A vaccine	Hepatitis A 1 <sup>st</sup>	
	Hepatitis A 2 <sup>nd</sup>	
Tetanus – Diphtheria and pertussis	Tdap ( <i>must be within 10 year</i> )	
Polio	<u>Last dose received</u>	
Meningococcal	Menactra	
Typhoid	<u>Within 3 years</u>	
Varicella	Varicella 1 <sup>st</sup>	
	Varicella 2 <sup>nd</sup>	
	Varicella Serology IgG	Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/>
Covid -19 vaccine	Vaccination Name  Date 1 <sup>st</sup> dose  Date 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose	Please attach your Covid-19 Vaccine Certificate

Health Care provider Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Official Stamp: