

Biological Hazards Assessment and Controls/Interventions

Participants of the October, 1998 conference recommended the following actions for employers and employees:

- Establish and consistently use universal precautions to bloodborne pathogens.
- Employers and especially employees should be observant regarding patient and environmental biological risk factors. Workers should have a clear role and specific training to safely complete assigned tasks.
- Consistent use of the assessment tools can alert workers to potential risks. Assessment information should be available to workers that interact with the patient/family maintaining confidentiality.
- Know the symptoms of illness that can be transmitted through the air such as tuberculosis.
- Learn the potential illnesses of the population that you serve.
- Be aware that recognizing and communicating about cultural difference may be important to reduce the risk of exposure to biological hazards.

Health and safety controls may be established by assessing where the hazard is and how it reaches the worker. Interventions may be set up at the source of the hazard, along the path between the source and the worker and at the worker. The following are specific hazards with suggestions for control/intervention:

Patients with Wound Drainage--

An appropriate wound care protocol should be established to include the following: Dressing disposal, Wound coverage/closure and

Training/education of Health care worker and patient-family.

Patients with Airborne Infectious Illnesses--

Establish a program for exposure control to include tuberculosis (TB) prevention and elements of the following:

Using fans to increase ventilation, Maintain a clean area, Provide patient/family/worker with flu shots, Use tissue/mask/hand washing, Provide TB skin tests and other medical surveillance and evaluation for workers with potential exposure to TB.

Preventing Foodborne Illness--

Enforce a policy that outlines:
Proper refrigeration of food, Use of food thermometers for cooking, Educate food handlers on sanitation and proper food handling techniques, Use disposable plates/utensils where necessary.

Preventing Pediculosis (Head and Body Lice)--

Establish procedures for identification, treatment, disinfection and a separate referral for patient/family treatment.

Resources: See the following websites for resources on biological hazards--

American Public Health Association www.apha.org for Communicable Diseases Manual, Occupational Safety and Health Administration www.osha.gov for standards and guidelines, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov for infection control recommendations.