Blood-Borne Viruses and students in Health and Social Care

Blood-Borne Viruses (BBV)

The blood-borne viruses include

Hepatitis B
Hepatitis C
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Any Health and Social Care worker who has any of these infections has a responsibility to manage them appropriately when working in health or social care environments.

Risks

The risk of transmission to other persons is very low, and will occur through sexual contact, or with direct blood transfer from one person to another.

There is no significant risk of transmission with normal social contact.

Health and Social Care workers may undertake all normal tasks in caring for persons in their charge. They may not, however, undertake Exposure Prone Procedures (EPP).

Exposure-Prone Procedures (EPPs)

EPPs are procedures where the operator's hands are working in a body cavity, in which there are sharp objects, either tissue or instruments, and when there may not be continuous sight of the operator's fingers.

Examples of such procedures include episiotomy cutting and repair, abdominal surgery and thoracic surgery.

Non-EPP Procedures

These may be carried out by Health and Social Care workers known to be infected with blood-borne viruses, and include, for example, suturing, catheter insertions, venepuncture, minor surgery procedures, insertion of central lines, injections.

Responsibilities

Any person who has a BBV infection working in a health and social care environment should make the Occupational Health Service of that organisation aware of their infection. They should not undertake any EPPs. The OH department should advise them on managing the risks to patients/clients.

They should be aware of the potential risks of transmission of a BBV to a patient/client, and should manage this risk appropriately. This may include informing a line manager (confidentially) if they are caring for patients with open wounds, and ensuring that if they have open wounds on their own hands, that these are covered when working with patients/clients.

Any person undertaking EPPs should be tested and speak to the OH adviser if they have a risk of contracting a BBV.