

## **HIV / Aids**

The following information sets out guidelines for Human-Immunodeficiency-Virus (HIV) infection control and protocols for staff or students who may be HIV positive. Further information is available from educational material such as NZ AIDS Foundation's website.

### ***Transmission of HIV***

HIV can be transmitted from one person to another in the following ways:

1. Via sexual intercourse
2. Via contaminated needles or syringes
3. Around the time of birth
4. Following the transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products
5. Through the donation of infected body organs or semen.

*There is no evidence to suggest that HIV can be transmitted by casual person-to-person contact or via body fluids other than blood, semen, or vaginal secretions.*

It is clear that in most situations there is no risk of transmission of the virus from an infected person to another staff member or student. The precautions indicated below in the checklist deal with those few processes where the risk of infection occurs.

### ***AIDS and the Effect of AIDS***

The Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was first recognised in 1981. AIDS is the end stage of a spectrum of diseases caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which attacks and weakens the body's natural defence (immune) system. People infected with the HIV virus become increasingly likely to develop certain infections which the body would normally be able to resist, as well as certain forms of cancer.

People who are infected with HIV may have no symptoms for a number of years. An HIV infected person is designated as having AIDS when they develop an illness which is usually associated with an ineffective immune system such as opportunistic infections (e.g. Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia), cancers (e.g. Kaposi's sarcoma) and neurological diseases (e.g. dementia).

### ***Incidence of AIDS in New Zealand***

In New Zealand a total of about 600 cases of AIDS have been notified to 30 June 1996. A majority of cases (about 85%) have involved homosexual males. The total number of people in New Zealand with HIV is unknown. The prevalence of infection in the community appears, however, to be low.

### ***Checklist for HIV Infection Prevention***

Staff and students are to be made aware of infection avoidance procedures as detailed below:

- Infection control procedures are to be included in research processes which involve human blood or tissue.
- Practical classes or research laboratories which use human blood or tissue must have a documented procedure for such work to ensure that the risk of infection is controlled. Processes requiring exposure to blood and courses in which the blood is obtained should use disposable equipment and no devices which have come into contact with blood should be reused or shared. Only staff and students for whom it is a professional teaching or training requirement should be required to handle the blood of others.
- Medical staff or students involved in medical practice are to be instructed in precautions to be observed in controlling infection.
- Medical and other health professional staff and students should observe strict precautions to avoid infection and should be acquainted with current directives and recommendations of the Regional Health Authority before doing any clinical work. Medical students who undertake electives in countries where the prevalence of HIV infection is high should obtain specific advice from their course supervisor.
- Staff or students rendering first aid and having unexpected contact with blood are to follow procedures to avoid HIV infection. First Aid courses will include guidelines outlining the precautions necessary to minimise the risk of transmission of HIV or other viral infections.

### ***Protocol Checklist for Staff or Students who are HIV Positive***

- There shall be no unlawful discrimination against an HIV positive staff member or student.

No student or staff member will be required by the University to take a test for HIV antibody. However, staff with HIV infection or AIDS should notify the Human Resources Section. Students with HIV infection or AIDS should notify the Student Health Service. No student will be refused admission to a course because they have HIV infection or AIDS.

- Staff members or students who may develop AIDS will be given the same considerations and rights as others who have a life-threatening disease.

University staff with HIV infection or AIDS are to be allowed to continue their normal duties and should not be prevented from continuing work except where they are deemed not to be medically fit through standard University procedures. Medical fitness of staff with HIV infection or AIDS will be determined through the normal sick leave provisions.

Redeployment to alternative employment should only be considered at the staff member's request. Departments may also need to make reasonable arrangements to enable a staff member with HIV infection or AIDS to continue in work so they may maintain confidence in social contact.

Students who are infected, whether they have the symptoms or not, should be allowed to attend classes in an unrestrictive manner, as long as they are physically and mentally able to participate. Where possible, the course supervisor may need to make reasonable arrangements to enable a student with HIV infection or AIDS to continue to study, to assist and to maintain confidence, and social contact.

- Staff members or students with AIDS are required to act responsibly to avoid infection of others.

Infected staff members are encouraged to seek expert care and advice on occupational health matters which may affect them. University staff or students who are infected should be able to enjoy unrestricted access to all University facilities, but should recognise they have an obligation to act responsibly towards fellow staff and students. Students who are infected should be aware of the dangers to others of accidental transmission through blood from cuts and abrasions.

- The appointment of HIV-infected personnel would be considered in the same way as those suffering from other medical conditions.

Applicants who are deemed “medically fit” at the time of interview should not be refused an offer of work because of HIV infection or AIDS.

- Staff or students in health care professions are to seek advice if they become HIV positive.

Staff and students in health care professions might, if affected, pose a threat to the health of their patients or themselves if they continue with their usual duties. Persons who recognise that they are a particular risk in the acquisition of HIV infection (for example, via sexual contact with at-risk persons or via injecting drug use) have a responsibility to be tested for HIV infection. Persons who test positive have a duty to seek and act on expert advice on occupational matters which may affect them and their patients/clients.