

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
7400 Merton Minter Boulevard
San Antonio, Texas 78284

RESEARCH SERVICE
MEMORANDUM NO. 05-1

April 14, 2005

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

1. PURPOSE: To provide policy and procedures for infection control and safety in research laboratories. Research Service operates in accordance with South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) HIV-Standard precautions/Bloodborne Pathogens protocols and policies, as well as other local, state and federal regulations.

2. POLICY FOR ALL RESEARCH LABORATORIES:

a. Food, drinks, smoking. No food or drinks are permitted in laboratories. Food/drinks are permitted only in rooms in which no chemicals or microbiologic agents are used, handled, or stored. Only refrigerators specifically designated for food only are to be used for food storage. Users are responsible for temperature monitoring and cleanliness. Smoking is not permitted within the facility.

b. Lab Access. Patients and/or research subjects are not to be brought into the Research secured areas. Entrance is restricted to those personnel authorized to work in the area. No tours may be taken through laboratories without prior permission of the Research Office. The main hallway corridor double doors will remain closed and locked at all times.

c. Protective Wear. Personal protective equipment shall be worn in accordance with hospital policy.

(1) Gloves. Gloves must be removed prior to leaving the lab. They should not be worn in halls, corridors, bathrooms, offices, etc., or when going from room-to-room through doorways where doorknobs, etc., might be handled. Gloves used in a procedure to protect the individual can carry the contaminant (infectious, chemical, or radioactive) to other places. Gloves should be disposed of properly.

(2) Shoes. Open-toe sandals or shoes are not permitted in the laboratory.

(3) Lab coats/smocks. Laboratory coats worn while working with radioactive materials, hazardous chemicals, or other hazardous agents must not be worn outside of the immediate work area.

d. Waste Disposal.

(1) Glass. All laboratories will have a box for disposal of all glass items (e.g., disposable pipettes, Pasteur pipettes, glass slides and cover slips, broken glassware, etc.) which can be sealed when full. This box should be lined with plastic to prevent leakage and clearly marked "BROKEN GLASS." Sealed box should be put in hallway for housekeeping to pick up. Glassware containing human body fluids and/or infectious agents will be disposed of as biohazardous waste.

(2) Sharps. Sharps containers should not be overfilled. All full Sharps containers should be sealed as soon as they become full and placed in the red plastic-lined biohazard box located in Cold Room 2 for disposal by SPD. Recapping of needles will be allowed if a one-handed recapping technique is followed. Sharps will be incinerated and are considered biohazardous waste. Replacement Sharps containers can be obtained in room V203.

(3) Biohazardous waste. All materials that have been used for animal or human blood or serum, all human and animal tissue culture cell lines and related materials (i.e., pipettes, dishes, and other plasticware) must be discarded in appropriate closable leak-proof biohazard waste containers. To prevent outside contamination, the container should be lined with an autoclavable bag for biohazardous materials. The bags must be tied before being transported to be autoclaved or incinerated. Treated Medical Waste sterilizer tape should be affixed to autoclave bag. All biohazardous materials will first be autoclaved before it leaves the Research area. The only exceptions are non-contaminated animal carcasses in Veterinary Medical Unit (VMU) and sharps containers. Potentially infectious materials should be autoclaved in a timely manner. If infectious materials/waste are held in excess of 48 hours, refrigeration shall be used. Record logs will be filed in room Q203. Before disposing of tissue culture dishes and flasks, media and buffers must be removed. Decontaminate liquid waste before disposal down the drain. The red biohazard waste containers will be cleaned with an appropriate EPA disinfectant and decontaminated on a regular basis or when visibly soiled. VMU personnel will use Verify (Steris) to monitor the effectiveness of the sterilizers in the VMU and Research area. Records of temperature checks will be kept in room U235.

e. Lab Procedures

- (1) All reagents must be properly contained, labeled (including hazard warnings), and dated.
- (2) All areas will be kept neat and clean. General clutter is to be avoided in laboratories. Employees will keep common use areas clean (e.g., cold rooms, wash rooms, counting room, etc.)
- (3) Rings and chains on the ceiling showers should be left hanging down for safety (e.g., if a person gets acid in the eye and is unable to see).
- (4) Each laboratory is responsible for flushing the eyewash station within the lab or in the hall outside the lab on a weekly basis and initialing the log on the date flushed.
- (5) Warning signs (e.g., radioactive, biohazard) should be placed on the room door and appropriate places within the room (e.g., refrigerator, sink, counter, disposal containers). Current emergency contact numbers should be posted on the door.
- (6) Mouth pipetting is strictly forbidden.
- (7) Employees will report the presence of pests to the Research Office immediately. Environmental Management Service will then be contacted.

f. Injuries/Incidents

(1) Injuries. The employee should be taken to Employee Health (or Urgent Care during non-duty hours). The injury should be reported to the Research Office and an accident report filed within 24 hours. Current hospital procedures will be adhered to. The Poison Control Network telephone number (1-713-654-1701) will be posted.

(2) Chemical exposure/spill. For chemical exposure or spill, the Industrial Hygienist will be contacted and procedures defined in the Research Service Chemical Hygiene Plan will be followed.

3. POLICY FOR VETERINARY MEDICAL UNIT:

- a. No smoking, drinking, or eating will be permitted in animal rooms.
- b. No tours will be conducted through veterinary medical unit unless approved by Research Office and conducted by VMU supervisor.

c. Individual animal cages/boxes and rooms will identify any infective agents used. All protocols using infectious agents require approval of the Biohazard Safety Subcommittee.

d. Scalpel blades, syringes, needles, and other sharp items will be placed into rigid, puncture resistant sharps containers. Full sharps containers will be sealed and placed in the plastic-lined biohazard box in Cold Room Number 2 for SPD pickup. Sharps are considered biohazardous waste and will be incinerated. Replacement sharps containers can be obtained in room V203.

e. Personnel receiving any animal bites will wash the bite area with soap and water and report to the Employee Health Physician during normal duty hours (or to Urgent Care/Triage during off hours) and file the accident report.

f. Handling of all contaminated material such as feed, bedding, and caging equipment will be accomplished by the Veterinary Medical Unit (VMU) personnel or appropriate laboratory personnel. Precautionary measures such as face masks, hair nets, gloves, and protective clothing will be worn as required or necessary. The hospital Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing Policy will be adhered to. Contaminated feed and bedding will be placed in autoclave bags and autoclaved before disposal. Contaminated clothing may be autoclaved and then washed. ("Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories," HHS Publication #CDC 93-8395) Room R219 in the VMU may be used to accomplish this requirement.

g. Housekeeping duties in Research animal areas will be accomplished by VMU animal technicians at least once a day, and more often if needed, using quaternary ammonium compounds and phenolics appropriate for areas being cleaned. Phenolics and any other listed EPA hazardous chemical will be used in drip-type bottles and not be used in spray bottles.

h. VMU will house only animals purchased from a vendor approved by the Department of Laboratory Animal Resources, UTHSC. Animals purchased from the local pound will not be housed in VMU unless arrangements to obtain animals from non-approved sources are approved by the Veterinary Medical Officer or VMU supervisor. Primates will not be housed in the VMU. Sheep, goats, pigs, dogs, and cats will not be housed in the VMU unless approval is received from the Veterinary Medical Officer.

i. The VMU key-operated freight elevator adjacent to Stairwell No. 4 will be used for delivery of live animals directly to the animal facility. This elevator is to be used only for the transport of animals or VMU supplies and only by authorized personnel for that purpose. It will not be used to transport patients, by visitors, or by employees when not transporting animals/supplies.

(1) Rodents. All rodents arriving at the VMU must be shipped in filtered boxes. All rodents shipped to the VA will be delivered by warehouse personnel to VMU personnel for approval. Rodents will not be removed from filtered boxes until VMU animal technicians have cleared the shipment. All newly arrived rodents will be quarantined and observed for 72 hours. Diseased or dead rodents will be reported to the Veterinary Medical Officer immediately. These animals after termination will be disposed of by incineration.

j. Patient diagnostic, treatment and monitoring areas and equipment may be used for nonhuman (animal) studies only when such use is of potential value to human patients. A Request to Use Patient Care Procedural Area for Animal Studies must be submitted through the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and approved by the VA Facility Director prior to any use of patient areas for animal studies in accordance with VHA Handbook 1200.7.

k. The policy for Animal Biosafety Level 2 is detailed in Research Service Memorandum "Animal Biosafety Level 2 in the Veterinary Medical Unit."

l. Gowns, gloves, and masks will be worn in the designated infected mouse rooms. Personal protective clothing will be removed before exiting the room. Before entering another infected mouse room, personnel will don clean gowns, gloves, and masks.

m. Clidox-S will be used to decontaminate surfaces in the infected mouse rooms.

4. REFERENCES:

- a. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-03-16, "Hazard Communication Program"
- b. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-21, "Procedural Response to Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure"
- c. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-36, "Waste Assessment and Disposal"
- d. Research Service Memorandum 05-4, "Chemical Hygiene Plan"
- e. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 151-03-4, "Health Program for Animal Technicians, Research Technicians and Investigators Exposed to Research Animals"
- f. Research Service Memorandum 03-7, "Procedures within the VMU"
- g. Research Service Memorandum 05-6, "Standard Operating Procedures for Animal Biosafety Level 2 in the Veterinary Medical Unit"
- h. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-29, "Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing"
- i. STVHCS "Radiation Safety Handbook," 2003
- j. VHA Handbook 1200.7, "Animal Subjects in Research"
- k. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-20, "Spill Clean-up Policy"
- l. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001 04-33, "Respiratory Protection Program"
- m. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-12, "Protective Footwear"
- n. Research Service Memorandum 05-5, "Rodent Disease Control Program"
- o. Research Service Memorandum 05-8, "Vermin Control Program for the VMU"
- p. STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-04-1, "Medical Surveillance"

5. RESCISSION: Research Policy Memorandum 01-1, dated May 2002.



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Distribution: All Research Personnel