XIII. Occupational Health Program

1. Overview

All individuals (i.e. faculty, staff, students, visiting scientists and volunteers) who work in lab animal facilities or have with the potential for direct or indirect contact with animals, human and/or animal tissues, biohazards, and hazardous chemicals must participate in the OSU Occupational Health Program. This program includes: identification and enrollment of personnel, hazard evaluations/ risk assessments, exposure controls, medical evaluations, and occupational health and safety training. The purpose and goal of the Occupational Health Program is to identify, evaluate, manage, and reduce potential health risks associated with work involving animals, biohazards, and hazardous chemicals.

Hazard assessments and medical surveillance are critical components of an effective occupational health program and involve the evaluation of health risks associated with an individual’s occupational exposures, as well as an individual’s current health status. A comprehensive occupational medicine program is provided through University Health Services, The Ohio State University’s Wexner Medical Center, OSU Student Health Services, or a designated contractor for regional sites. After reviewing an individual’s information, a member of the Occupational Health team determines if a medical evaluation is necessary. During the medical evaluation, employees are counseled about exposure to hazardous agents that they may encounter in the course of their employment at The Ohio State University. Sources for additional information are given to the employee at that time. In many cases, an initial evaluation and risk assessment is all that is necessary. For some individuals, a clinical examination, vaccinations, and medical monitoring may be required as well.

2. Enrollment

Personnel shall enroll in the Occupational Health Program by

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completing an online questionnaire at https://rf.osu.edu/secure/ochre. If an individual experiences a change in their health status or a change in their occupational exposure, he/she should update their information by updating relevant information at https://rf.osu.edu/secure/ochre. Personnel must update their occupational health registry information annually, or in the event of changes in health status or occupational exposures.

3. Medical Disclosures

Personnel that work with biohazards and have chronic medical conditions are asked to disclose these conditions to University Health Services (if unpaid students, Student Health Services). These conditions will be evaluated as part of the health evaluation. Some medical conditions and treatments can increase the severity or risk of an adverse health outcome resulting from occupational exposures.

4. Research Risk Assessment

Use of hazardous agents requires an approved Biosafety Research Protocol, Chemical Hygiene Plan and/or Radioactive Materials Application, which are reviewed and approved by the Institutional Biosafety committee (IBC), the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS), and/or the University Radiation Safety Committee (URSC) respectively. When completing the initial risk assessment for a biohazard research project, the PI must include an evaluation of the appropriate medical surveillance, prophylactic measures (e.g., immunizations), possible treatment options, and post exposure follow-up requirements for the biohazard agent(s). This assessment is performed by the supervisor/PI in conjunction with University Health Services. The requirements for routine medical surveillance, prophylaxis, and post-exposure treatment and follow-up for work with biohazards are dictated by the risk assessment.

5. Vaccinations
Hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine is available free of charge to all employees who could reasonably anticipate exposures to human blood or other potentially infectious materials (e.g. human tissues, human cell lines, blood products, etc.) while performing their job duties. Employees with a potential for exposure to human blood or potentially infectious materials must be offered HBV immunization (cf., OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard, 29 CFR 1910.1030).

When vaccinations are deemed necessary in the biohazard risk assessment, personnel may be required to receive a vaccine as a condition of employment or demonstrate an active immunity to the agent in question. Personnel should consult with University Health Services for specific information.

6. Routes of Exposure

Exposures can occur in research personnel via:
- Injections, including, but not limited to cuts, abrasions, puncture wounds or via contamination of an existing skin injury;
- Absorption through skin (failure to wear PPE/ properly use PPE), as well as splashes to mucous membranes (e.g. eyes, nose, mouth);
- Ingestion resulting from improper lab practices (e.g. eating/drinking in lab, failure to wash hands prior to exiting lab); and
- Inhalation

7. Reporting Exposures, Illnesses, or Injuries

Personnel experiencing any injury or illnesses related to occupational exposures must report the event to their supervisor or PI and University Health Services (614-293-8146), as well as submit an Employee Accident Report. Concerns or symptoms of allergies to lab animals should be reported as soon as they are noted. Known exposures to infectious agents or other biologically hazardous material (e.g. recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid molecules) must
be reported to PI/supervisor; University Health Services (614-293-8146); and to the Institutional Biosafety Officer (Environmental Health & Safety at 614-292-1284). If medical treatment is needed, personnel should go to University Health Services or Student Health Services. Student employees shall go to Employee Health Services and non-paid students to Student Health Services. Employee Health Services is located on the 2nd floor, McCampbell Hall at 1581 Dodd Dr. Student Health Services (614-292-4321) is located at 1875 Millikin Road. If medical treatment is needed after hours, personnel should report to the Wexner Medical Center Emergency Department. Personnel working at regional campuses shall go to the nearest Emergency Department for medical treatment. If personnel seek medical treatment in an Emergency Department, they must have an evaluation and complete an Employee Accident Report at University Health Services, Student Health Services or the regional site’s designated contractor prior to returning to work.

8. Reproductive Hazards
Persons capable of and considering reproduction should consider the ramifications of working with chemical, biological, or radiological agents, or animals. Information that should be reviewed while considering whether precautions will be necessary include: Safety Data Sheets (SDS), the laboratory’s Chemical Hygiene Plan and/or the biohazard risk assessment. Individuals who are concerned about potential reproductive hazards in the workplace may contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (614-292-1284) with questions on locating relevant safety information.