

Workplace Hazards in Medical Services

This fact sheet is for students undertaking work experience programs, and for their host employers. It can be used as a tool to assist with task planning, and to develop appropriate induction, training and supervision to minimise any risk to students while they are 'at work'.

Students must be given instruction, and must be supervised at all times. Consideration must always be given to hazards when allocating tasks. If any risk exists, students must NOT undertake the activity.

Hazard	Possible Harmful Effects	Possible Employer Action to Prevent Injury / Illness	Preventative Action Students Can Take
Slippery floors	Slips, trips or falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide floor mats ◆ Require use of non-slip shoes ◆ Keep floors clean ◆ Use signs to warn of temporarily slippery surfaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clean up spills quickly
Mechanical aids, including patient transfer equipment	<p>Incorrect use could result to operator being pinned down or patient/resident falling off</p> <p>Manual handling issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Document safe work procedures ◆ Train staff in correct use ◆ Ensure mechanical aid used is appropriate to the task ◆ Maintain mechanical aids in good order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Follow safe work procedures
Cleaning products Sanitisers Prescribed medication	<p>Skin contact may cause irritation or dermatitis</p> <p>Vapours/fumes may cause headaches or other respiratory problems</p> <p>Long-term exposure may cause chronic (ongoing) effects</p> <p>Spillage could affect patients (more than usually susceptible to ill effects)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use the least hazardous product for each job ◆ Label all containers ◆ Store prescribed medication securely, to prevent unauthorised access or use ◆ Provide Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) ◆ Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when provided – this could include rubber gloves, eye protection ◆ Read safety information on MSDS ◆ Use PPE provided
Contact with public	Stress, criminal violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Arrange adequate security ◆ Provide emergency response training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Report any concerns immediately
Standing for long periods	Back injuries, varicose veins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide floor mats ◆ Schedule regular breaks ◆ Rotate jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Take breaks when scheduled
Manual handling (bending, reaching, stretching, pulling, lifting, repetitive motions)	Musculoskeletal disorders, including sprains and strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Undertake risk assessment of all manual handling tasks ◆ Re-design workplace layout contributing to work-related injuries ◆ Rotate jobs and share workload ◆ Schedule regular breaks ◆ Provide mechanical aids, e.g. hoists ◆ Recommend team lifts where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Follow instructions and training ◆ Use mechanical aids, stepladders where provided ◆ Seek help when you think a team lift is required ◆ Use appropriate clothing for safe movement, eg. when squatting
Items contaminated with blood or body fluids; needle sticks when cleaning	Blood-borne diseases	Students must NOT clean contaminated waste	Students must NOT clean contaminated waste
Sexual harassment, work place bullying	Emotional stress, fear and anxiety, physical illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Establish work place policy ◆ Provide staff briefings or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Report any concerns immediately
Patients/relatives who are abusive and/or violent	Verbal or physical abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Document and follow safe work and emergency procedures ◆ Provide duress alarms for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Report any concerns immediately

