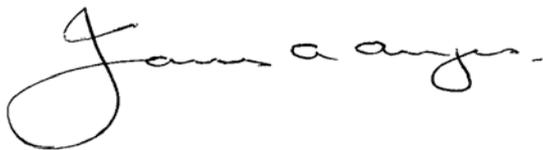


Medical Board of Australia (MBA): Draft ‘Guidelines for medical practitioners and medical students infected with blood borne viruses’

Response from Medical Deans

Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans), comprises the 18 medical schools in Australia and the two New Zealand schools. The organisation is committed to the continual development and advocacy of medical education, training and research in Australia and New Zealand and is actively engaged in identifying, addressing and leading national issues in these areas.

1. All Medical Schools have infection – control policy or guidelines.
2. The University/School based guidelines have in the main followed the CDAMS (now Medical Deans) *Guidelines for Infectious Diseases Policies and Programs for Medical Schools* which were developed approximately ten years ago.
3. University/Medical School Guidelines have also been framed around requirements from State Medical Board requirements as appropriate.
4. With the establishment of the Medical Board of Australia, a number of the School policies have been updated to make reference to the requirement of the MBA that all medical practitioners (including medical students) know their own status in relation to blood borne viruses.
5. In general, School policies/guidelines are consistent with the MBA’s draft Guidelines.
6. Medical Deans acknowledges the need for Guidelines at a national level. It is important however to recognise that Universities each have their own professional standards policies, and are best placed to manage issues of student impairment and conduct. In this respect, Medical Deans notes the Guidelines’ specific provisions around the ‘*Notifications about an impairment*’ and welcomes the clear distinctions made in relation to the notification obligations on education providers and others.
7. With respect to Question 2, Medical Deans believes it is reasonable to expect that medical students infected with a blood borne virus will comply with the Board’s Guidelines and their treating specialist doctors’ advice. As a general principle, Deans do not support, at this stage, conditions being imposed on the student’s registration that prevent them from performing exposure prone procedures. However Deans are mindful of the safety of the public, and would welcome a discussion between the MBA, the Federal Privacy Commissioner and Medical Deans on this issue.
8. Medical Deans also believes it important that students are aware that they must comply with their own medical school requirements. It would be helpful therefore for the MBA Guidelines to provide a general reference to students to refer to their own School policy for specific requirements in relation to blood-borne viruses.
9. Although, it is clear that the Guidelines apply to registered medical students (section 2), the inconsistency in referencing medical practitioner/medical student throughout the document, needs to be reviewed, for example, section 5 refers in one paragraph to just medical practitioners, and at other times, to medical practitioners and students. This causes confusion as to applicability.



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