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The Royal Australian
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College of Ophthalmologists

Infection Control in Surgery Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV

Approved by:	Board	Last review:	December 2010
Approval date:	May 2006	Version:	1.1

Infection Control in Surgery – Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV

The policy on infection control in surgery – hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV, developed by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has been accepted as policy by The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists:

Surgeons who perform invasive procedures should be aware of their HIV/Hepatitis B / Hepatitis C status by routine and regular (annual) serological testing and if susceptible to Hepatitis B, it is strongly recommended they undergo a course of Hepatitis B immunisation.

Surgeons who are HIV antibody or HbeAg or Hepatitis C PCR positive, and are considered to be infectious should not perform invasive procedures or operations. They may provide these services to patients who have the same infections.

The restriction on surgeons who are Hepatitis C PCR positive should remain until following treatment the surgeon has been shown to be PCR negative on at least two successive occasions one month apart. PCT testing should continue on a regular basis for at least a further twelve months.

Surgeons are at risk from patients by these viruses when performing invasive procedures. The risk is extremely high with Hepatitis B, less with Hepatitis C and least with HIV.

Active immunisation against Hepatitis B is available, but your immune status against this dangerous virus should be confirmed by blood test.

As yet, there is no active immunisation against Hepatitis C or HIV.

Needle stick injuries, involving known or suspected HIV positive, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C patients, must be immediately reported so that appropriate action may be taken.

All health care settings must have an arrangement in place for this assessment, and a review process to identify methods of reducing the number of such incidents.

It would be wise for all doctors to establish an adequate level of personal disability insurance.

*These guidelines have been developed in conjunction with NSW Department of Health