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1. **Scope**

This SOP applies to the staff and students carrying out point-of-care testing (POCT) in the Pharmacy Practice Resource Unit (PPRU) of the Pharmacy Department, University of Malta.

2. **Objective**

To describe the health and safety guidelines for POCT.

3. **Definitions**

3.1. **Bio-hazardous Waste:** Waste consisting of substances that may cause disease in living organisms or cause significant impact to the environment.

3.2. **Medical Device:** Any instrument, apparatus, material or other article used for diagnosis, prevention, monitoring, treatment or alleviation of disease.

3.3. **Needle Stick Injury:** An injury involving a penetrating wound by a needle or other sharp instrument that can be potentially contaminated with blood or other body fluids.

3.4. **Point-of-Care Testing (POCT):** Involves combining the scientific and clinical aspects of pharmacy to perform tests at or near the site of patient care. POC test equipment range from small hand-held devices to table-top analysers. POCT is used in the monitoring, diagnosis, screening and detecting recurrence of acute or chronic disease.

3.5. **Post-Exposure Prophylaxis:** A form of treatment that is started immediately after exposure or supposed exposure to a pathogen to prevent infection and subsequent disease development.

3.6. **Sharps:** Objects or devices with sharp points or cutting edges capable of cutting or piercing the skin. Examples include hypodermic needles, lancets, broken glassware, scalpels and blades.

3.7. **Sharps Container:** A rigid walled, puncture proof container used to hold contaminated sharps and must be discarded when \( \frac{2}{3} \) full.
4. **Responsibility**

4.1. The members of the Department of Pharmacy (staff and students) are responsible for following this SOP.

4.2. The designated Laboratory Officer or Laboratory Assistant is responsible for ensuring that this SOP is followed.

5. **Procedure**

5.1. **General Safety**

Refer to Section 5.1 in SOP/PD/103_02: Health and Safety in the Laboratory.

5.2. **Lab Wear**

5.2.1. Wear a cotton lab coat.

5.2.2. Keep lab coat buttoned at all times.

5.2.3. Wear disposable gloves to carry out activities which can pose a risk of exposure to blood and/or other body fluids and when handling sharps or contaminated instruments.

5.2.4. Consider gloves as single use items. Remove and replace with a new pair when an activity is completed and a new one is to be started.

5.2.5. Remove gloves carefully after use to ensure that any contaminated fluid present on the gloves will not come into contact with the skin.

5.3. **First Aid**

Refer to Section 5.4 in SOP/PD/103_02: Health and Safety in the Laboratory.

5.4. **Handling Sharps**

5.4.1. Ensure you are vaccinated against Hepatitis B before handling sharps.

5.4.2. Cover any cuts or abrasions with waterproof plasters before handling sharps.

5.4.3. Reduce handling of sharps to a minimum.
5.4.4. Do not allow sharps to pass from one hand of a person to another.
5.4.5. Do not handle more than one sharp at a time.
5.4.6. Keep the sharp end away from you at all times.
5.4.7. Wash hands with soap and running water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, if hands are not visibly soiled after handling sharps.

If using a hypodermic syringe:

5.4.8. Do not recap needle.
5.4.9. Do not break or bend a syringe needle to try to render it useless.
5.4.10. Do not disassemble syringe by hand prior to disposal.

5.5. Waste Management and Disposal of Sharps

5.5.1. Bring the sharps container near the area where sharps are being used.
5.5.2. Place the sharps container on a flat level surface.
5.5.3. Discard contaminated sharps into the sharps container, sharps end first.
5.5.4. Inform Laboratory Officer when sharps container is 2/3 full to be discarded appropriately.
5.5.5. Inform Laboratory Officer if uncontaminated broken glassware is present to be discarded in a sturdy cardboard box and securely sealed when full.
5.5.6. Dispose other items that have come into contact with body fluids as bio-hazardous waste.

5.6. Emergency

5.6.1. Call the emergency phone number (Fire and Ambulance 112) posted on the door in case of an emergency.
5.6.2. Be familiar with the location and use of the first aid box and its contents.
5.6.3. Flush splashes to the nose and/or mouth with water.
5.6.4. Flush splashes to the eye/s with eye wash solution from the eye wash station.
If a needle-stick injury occurs:

5.6.5. Encourage the wound to bleed by gently squeezing the site but do not try to suck it.
5.6.6. Wash the area with soap and running water.
5.6.7. Treat all needles as being potentially contaminated and thus promptly visit a health care centre to determine whether post-exposure prophylaxis is required.
5.7. Flow Charts

5.7.1. Lab Wear

- Start
  - Wear a cotton lab coat
  - Keep lab coat buttoned at all times

- Activity carries risk of exposure to blood and/or other body fluids or handling sharps / contaminated instruments

  - Yes
    - Wear disposable gloves
    - Consider gloves as single use items. Remove and replace with a new pair when an activity is completed and a new one is to be started
    - Remove gloves carefully so that any contaminated fluid present on gloves will not come into contact with the skin

  - No

- End
5.7.2. Handling Sharps

Start

Vaccinated against Hepatitis B

- Yes
  - Cuts or abrasions present
    - Yes
      - Cover with waterproof plasters
    - No
      - Reduce handling of sharps to a minimum
  - No
    - Do not pass sharps to other persons
    - Handle one sharp at a time
    - Always keep sharp end away from you

Hands visibly soiled

- Yes
  - Wash with soap and running water
- No
  - Using a hypodermic syringe
    - Yes
      - Do not recap needle after use
      - Do not break or bend needle to try to render it useless
      - Do not disassemble syringe prior to disposal
    - No
      - Use an alcohol-based hand rub after handling sharps

End
5.7.3. Waste Management and Disposal of Sharps

Start

Bring sharps container near area where sharps are being used

Place sharps container on a flat level surface

Discard contaminated sharps into sharps container, sharps end first

Sharps container \( \frac{2}{3} \) full

Yes

Inform Laboratory Officer to be discarded appropriately

No

Need to discard uncontaminated broken glassware

Yes

Inform Laboratory Officer to discard uncontaminated broken glassware appropriately

No

Inform Laboratory Officer to discard uncontaminated broken glassware appropriately

Dispose other items that have come into contact with body fluids as bio-hazardous waste

End
5.7.4. Emergency

Start

Call emergency phone number (112) posted on door in case of an emergency

Be familiar with location of first aid box and its contents

Splashes to nose and/or mouth

- Yes: Flush nose and/or mouth with water
- No: Splashes to eye/s

Splashes to eye/s

- Yes: Irrigate eye/s with eye wash solution from eye wash station
- No: Needle stick injury

Needle stick injury

- Yes: Encourage wound to bleed by gentle squeezing but do not suck
- No: Wash area with soap and running water

- Yes: Promptly visit health care centre to determine whether post-exposure prophylaxis is required

End

No

Be familiar with location of first aid box and its contents

Splashes to nose and/or mouth

- Yes: Flush nose and/or mouth with water
- No: Splashes to eye/s

Splashes to eye/s

- Yes: Irrigate eye/s with eye wash solution from eye wash station
- No: Needle stick injury

Needle stick injury

- Yes: Encourage wound to bleed by gentle squeezing but do not suck
- No: Wash area with soap and running water

- Yes: Promptly visit health care centre to determine whether post-exposure prophylaxis is required

End

No
6. Precautions

Refer to section 5. Procedure.

7. References


8. Appendices

N/A

9. Revision History

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