
Why is it important for health students to have adequate knowledge about infection prevention and control (IPC) practices?

Health students are exposed early to hospitals and activities which increase their risk of acquiring and transmitting infections. These infections usually caused by viruses and bacteria can be spread from health worker to patient and the other way around through human contact, airborne transmission such as droplets and aerosols, contact with infested surfaces and other vehicles such as food and water if infection prevention and control measures are not followed. Exposure to infectious diseases is one of the most frequently identified occupational hazards facing health students and early provision of training programs that provide information about protection of health students from these exposures is therefore appropriate and of paramount significance. Standard precautions are intended to lessen the risk of acquiring hospital associated infection from both the known and unexpected sources of in the health care setting.

Strict application by health staff including health students of standard precautions may prevent a percentage of the risks but due to the limited experience in performing invasive and non-invasive procedures, health students are at risk of exposure to blood borne pathogens and other infections.

Therefore, health students must have adequate knowledge and skills before their initial training period at the hospital which is a pre requisite for compliance. Moreover, specialized training must be given before a health student undertake any procedure involving sharp objects. Few studies report on health students' knowledge of standard precaution and the few report of observance of hygiene as being weak.

At least 5%–10% of patients admitted to acute care hospitals acquire an infection. It is predicted that one in every 20 hospitalized patients will contract an infection. The risk is substantial not only for patients, but health care workers (HCWs) as well, including health students. Thus, it is important for health students to have adequate knowledge about infection prevention and control (IPC) practices.

There is lack of evidence with respect to explicit infection control training in the curriculum of most undergraduate health courses, which needs to be addressed if HCAI rates are to be reduced. Also compliance on the part of the health workers, including health students, with standard precautions and hand hygiene has been recognized as an efficient means to prevent and control Hospital associated infections.