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Section 8: Occupational Health Program

8.0 Overview

The University provides occupational health and safety services to ensure appropriate occupational health and safety surveillance (and if necessary care) for lab personnel involved in research approved by the IBC. Through Environmental Health & Safety Department, the Occupational Health Program is provided to research personnel (faculty, research personnel, students and visitors) who may be exposed to biohazardous materials. This program is provided free of charge to research personnel and all information collected will be maintained in a confidential manner, as required by law.

8.1 The IBC's Responsibility for Occupational Health and Safety

OSHA places responsibility for ensuring a safe working environment for personnel involved in the animal care and use program with the institution. An effective Occupational Health Program works with many separate institutional components including research, environmental health and safety, occupational health, and administration and management. A natural point of convergence for these functionally distinct institutional elements at many institutions is the IBC. Assurance of a safe working environment is one of the topics the IBC should consider in each biosafety proposal and NIH registration. It is generally necessary to involve health and safety specialists in the design and implementation of the IBC review guidelines.

8.2 Role of the IBC in the Occupational Health Program

Procedures should be developed for conducting a health and safety review of research activities that present hazards. These procedures should be incorporated into the IBC protocol review process. Procedures to identify and address non-experimental hazards (e.g., during lab inspections and program reviews) should also be implemented. Communication and other procedural links between the IBC and the environmental health and safety professional or office should be established, maintained and documented. The IBC has a role in ensuring that personnel comply with health and safety requirements (e.g., ensuring personnel have received appropriate training, evaluating compliance with standard operating procedures or institutional policy annual PAM meetings, etc.).

8.3 Elements of the Occupational Health Program

An effective program design requires input from health and safety specialists and will include the following elements:

- Administrative procedures,
- Facility design and operation,
- Risk assessment,
- Exposure control,
- Education and training,
- Occupational healthcare services,
- Personal protective equipment,
- Equipment performance,
- Information management,
- Emergency procedures, and
- Program evaluation.

The details of each element will be dictated by the extent and nature of employees' exposure and the type of animal use program.

8.4 Participation in the Occupational Health Program

A wide range of personnel (e.g., investigators, technical staff, students, volunteers, engineers, housekeepers, security officers, and maintenance personnel who care for or use animals, their tissues or fluids, or who may be exposed to them because of their job) should be provided the opportunity to participate in the OHP. The extent and level of participation of personnel in the EHS/OHP should be based on risk assessment, including:

- hazards posed by the animals and materials used;
- exposure intensity, duration, and frequency;
- susceptibility of personnel; and
- history of occupational illness and injury in the workplace.

Health and safety specialists should be involved in the assessment of risks associated with hazardous activities. At University of Denver, the Office of EHS / OHP helps to protect the health and safety of faculty, students and staff who work with vertebrate animal species in the course of their research. The program is designed to customize the participation requirements based on the type and degree of exposure to animals. A set of questionnaires, including a baseline health assessment, and one for periodic updates is used to assess this degree of risk.

The DU Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP), which has been implemented in accordance with the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) regulation, *Occupational exposure to hazardous chemical in laboratories*, 29 CFR 1910.1450 provides for appropriate control measures for chemical hazards for laboratory workers. Through the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Radiation Service Division, DU maintains radioactive materials licenses, #COLO108-05 which applies for all personnel using radioactive material. The DU Radiation Safety Officers (RSO) oversees radiological hazards issues including personnel training and the use and disposal of radioisotopes.

8.4.1 Occupational Health Review Form

Persons exposed to biological hazards in a laboratory environment must complete the "Occupational Health Review Form" questionnaire. The completion of the "Occupational Health Review Form" questionnaire is located at the IBC Submission Forms page on the

"rDNA & Biosafety (IBC)" tab of the ORSP website and is required to provide additional details that can assist in offering targeted health risk counseling to program participants. The questionnaire is then submitted via a Microsoft forms link. The IBC Coordinator will then forward the questionnaire to the contracted Occupational Medicine Physician or Physician's Assistant (PA) for evaluation.

The individual may be contacted to clarify certain items. Once the questionnaire has been reviewed and approved, clearance is granted to the individual by EH&S. Notification of this clearance is sent to the IBC Administrator. If the EH&S determines that there is a particular reason for a follow-up screening appointment, one will be arranged.

If for any reason, the individual would like to meet with a health professional, regardless of the risk analysis, EH&S will refer the students to the University Health & Counseling Center and DU employees to their personal physicians.

8.5 Occupational Health Program Education and Training

There are ethical and legal requirements to inform individuals of workplace health risks that could potentially affect them and appropriate precautions to mitigate those risks. The objectives of the University's Occupational Health Program can be achieved only if employees are appropriately trained and understand the hazards associated with their work area and job duties, and how those risks are mitigated through institutional policies, engineering controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment.
Training should include information about:

- Zoonoses,
- Chemical safety,
- Microbiologic and physical hazards (e.g., allergens and radiation),
- Hazards associated with experimental procedures,
- Handling of waste materials, and
- Personal hygiene.

8.5.1 CITI Web-based Protocol Specific Training Modules

Training and education is required for all research personnel who may be exposed to potential risks and exposure involving hazardous materials or environments associated with their work area and job responsibilities. The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program provides specific training modules in the areas of Biosafety Complete Training Series, Bloodborne Pathogens, Laboratory Safety, and Federal Regulations, etc. to address work practices and fulfill the mandatory training requirements for investigators and research personnel. The Biosafety Complete Training Series must be completed every four years. The Bloodborne Pathogens training is required annually for those individuals that are exposed to blood or Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM), and the Laboratory Safety Training is required annually for all personnel working in a lab.