Universal Precautions & Infectious Disease Policy

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Purpose:
Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine Centers is committed to providing a safe work and patient care environment, educating and providing guidelines to employees to follow regarding universal precautions that prevent the spread of illness and ensuring that individuals exposed to any infectious disease(s) are provided with fair and equal treatment by the organization. PTSMC believes all employees should be educated, informed and prepared for any situation where employees or patients are exposed to any infectious disease or pandemic outbreak.

Eligibility:
This policy applies to all PTSMC employees.

Education:
PTSMC will educate and train all new employees within their first 30 days of employment. PTSMC will provide annual educational workshops as well as policy and procedure updates to employees regarding universal precautions, safe work and patient care environments and other important safety issues. The workshop will include information on prevention and factual support in accordance with PTSMC company policies.

Universal Precautions:
The following are Precautions for a variety of situations. Most of these guidelines were developed by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control. Although some of these guidelines address uncommon situations to PTSMC clinics, it is important to know them, and be prepared. PTSMC expects all employees to follow these guidelines when appropriate.

Precautions to Stay Healthy:
These steps help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away immediately.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings. In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.

Universal Precautions for Healthcare Workers:
Blood and body fluid precautions should be consistently used for all patients. The principle underlying universal precautions is that the blood and certain other body fluids of all recipients of health care are to be considered potentially infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and other blood-borne pathogens.

- Good hand washing is mandatory before and after direct patient contact. Hands should be washed before putting on latex gloves and immediately after their removal. Good hand washing includes a vigorous and thorough scrub with soap and water. You must continuously rub hands with soapy lather for 20 seconds.
- All healthcare workers should routinely use appropriate barrier precautions to prevent skin and mucous-membrane exposure when in contact with blood or body fluids.
    - Latex or vinyl gloves should be readily accessible.
    - Gloves should be worn for touching blood, body fluids, or non-intact skin of all patients.
    - Gloves should be changed after contact with each patient.
    - Masks and protective eyewear should be worn in procedures that are likely to generate droplets of blood or other body fluids to prevent exposure of mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes.
    - Gowns or aprons should be worn during procedures that are likely to generate splashes of blood or other body fluids.

Universal Precautions for Healthcare Workers: continued

- Hands and other skin surfaces should be washed immediately and thoroughly if contaminated with blood or other body fluids.
    - Hands should be washed with disinfectant immediately after gloves are removed.
- Open and draining wounds should be covered (dressing, clothing) so as to prevent contamination of personnel and the environment.
- All healthcare workers should take precautions to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels, and other sharp instruments or devices during procedures.
- Any piece of equipment or environment contaminated by drainage or direct contact with an open area should be cleaned with soap/detergent and water and then wiped down with a disinfectant immediately after treatment by an Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Physical Therapy Assistant or Athletic Trainer.
- Although saliva has not been implicated in HIV transmissions, healthcare workers should minimize the need for emergency mouth-to-mouth.
    - Mouthpieces, resuscitation bags, or other ventilation devices should be available for use in areas in which the need for resuscitation is predictable.
- Healthcare workers with open cuts or lesions should practice using barrier methods, such as gloves or bandages over wounds.

Universal Precautions Air Borne Pathogens:

Below are precautions regarding air borne pathogens such as Tuberculosis (TB).

- PTSMC will ensure that proper cleaning and sterilization or disinfection of potentially contaminated equipment (treatment tables, linens, countertop, and other gym equipment) is always maintained.
- PTSMC will train and educate employee regarding TB, with specific focus on prevention, transmission, and symptoms.
- According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), PTSMC has the right to screen and evaluate employees who are at risk for TB disease or who might be exposed to M. tuberculosis (i.e., TB screening program).
- PTSMC will use effective work practices for the management of patients with suspected or confirmed TB disease.

PTSMC Guidelines for Handling and Disposing of Biomedical Waste:

Purpose:

PTSMC strives to promote the health and safety of co-workers, patients, visitors, and the organization by ensuring that employees receive proper education and training as it relates to each hazardous substance to which an employee is routinely exposed during the course of employment. All appropriate employees will be familiar with the safe handling of substances regarding health hazards, exposure symptoms, first aid, and spill clean-up.

How to clean up blood/bodily fluid

- Warn others in the area and **isolate the contaminated area**. Prevent others from walking through or near the spill.
- Put on personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the spill size (e.g., gloves, long-sleeved coveralls, safety goggles).
- Remove glass or sharps, if necessary, with forceps, tongs or scoop.
- For a wet spill, cover with disinfectant-soaked absorbent towels, wipe, and remove toweling. (This decreases the likelihood of causing a splash). **Any visible blood or body fluid must be cleaned thoroughly before proceeding to the next step.**
- Apply one of the approved disinfectants listed in the table below to the area:

Product	**No Contact Drying Time (to ensure blood borne pathogens are killed)**
¼ cup bleach per 1 gallon of water	10 minutes
70% isopropyl alcohol	Evaporates rapidly, thus making extended contact time difficulty to achieve unless items are immersed.
Dimension III	10 minutes
Asepti-Wipes	10 minutes
SaniZide Germicidal Surface Disinfectant	10 minutes

- Pre-soaked wipes may be used for smaller spills.
- Wipe up and clean again with soap and water.
- Properly dispose of clean-up materials into red biohazard waste bags/containers. Also, place glass, needles, rigid plastic or other sharps into red biohazard sharps containers. No items are allowed to stick out of any biohazard container (e.g., mops, etc.). The containers must be kept closed.
- Remove gloves, place in waste, but put on a new pair of gloves.

Handling and Disposal of Dressings and/or Contaminated Material:

Dressings: Should be removed using non-sterile latex gloves. Dressings are then placed in a BIOHAZARDOUS WASTE RECEPTACLE.

**Provisions for the removal of the Biohazardous Waste Receptacle should be established in each clinic.*

Used Linen: (johnnies, gowns, towels, pillow cases, etc.) Should be placed in the washer and bleach applied to the affected area by an employee who has received Hep B Vaccination.

Latex or Vinyl Gloves: If "contaminated," gloves which have had direct contact with infected or possible infected material (i.e. open wounds) should be disposed of in a BIOHAZARDOUS WASTE RECEPTACLE.

Preventative Hygiene and Social Distancing Procedure

PTSMC will take proactive steps to protect the workplace, employees and patients in the event of an infectious disease or pandemic outbreak. Employees are asked to stay home if they are sick. In addition, ALL employees will be asked to engage in hygiene practices while at work, especially washing their hands with soap and water and frequently using anti-bacterial sanitizing gel.

Environmental Infection Control and Procedure

Routine cleaning and disinfection strategies used every day in PTSMC clinics should be done more often in cases of pandemic or infectious disease outbreaks. Management of laundry, treatment tables, and gym equipment should be routinely sanitized as well. (www.cdc.gov)

Common Infectious Diseases:

Tuberculosis
Information taken from OSHA and the CDC and adapted for PTSMC.

Information:
Tuberculosis (TB) is a potentially fatal disease transmitted through the air and is fully treatable and preventable. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational and Health Safety (OSHA), TB is the second most common cause of death from infectious disease in the world after HIV/AIDS. Individuals with HIV have a higher risk of contracting TB than those who are not infected with the virus. TB is normally transmitted only through air, as opposed to surface contact. TB is a disease that can be difficult to manage at times, because there are various drug-resistant strains, which contributes to the spread of TB.

Importantly, the CDC discusses one strain known as M. tuberculosis. This strain is carried in airborne particles called droplet nuclei, and can be generated when persons who have pulmonary or laryngeal TB disease cough, sneeze, etc. Normal air currents can keep them airborne for prolonged periods and spread them throughout a room or building. If exposed, the immune response limits additional multiplication of the tubercle bacilli, and immunologic test results for M. tuberculosis infection will become positive. Certain bacilli can remain in the body and are viable for multiple years.

Employees with Tuberculosis:
PTSMC employees with TB disease will be allowed to return to work when they have had three negative acid-fast bascilli (AFB) sputum smear results collected 8 to 24 hours apart, with at least one being an early morning specimen because respiratory secretions pool overnight. Secondly, employees must also have responded to anti-tuberculosis treatment. In addition, PTSMC employees with TB disease will be allowed to return to work when a physician knowledgeable and experienced in managing TB disease determines that the employee is noninfectious. However, please note that consideration will also be given to the setting and the potential risk to patients at the facility in which the employee works. Both employee and patient confidentiality will be maintained through the entire process in which they have been infected with M. tuberculosis and TB disease.

Treating Individuals with Tuberculosis in Physical Therapy:
One of the most critical risks for PTSMC employees is the transmission from patients with unrecognized TB disease who are not promptly handled with appropriate airborne precautions. Potential TB carriers can spread the disease through coughing, especially when an individual does not cover their mouth. If a patient is suspected or confirmed to have TB, PTSMC will screen and evaluate employees who are at risk for TB disease or who might have been exposed to M. tuberculosis free of cost.

Tuberculosis (TB) Testing:
TB testing must be completed by all new employees with exposure to patients prior to beginning work with written documentation of outcome filed with Human Resources department. Specifically, any position that works on a daily basis in a clinic is required to provide proof of TB testing and the outcome within the past six (6) months prior to starting employment.

Hepatitis B (HBV)
Information below is provided by OSHA, Rules and Regulations; these procedures have been adapted for PTSMC.

Information:
Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a blood borne pathogen, which causes inflammation of the liver and be can potentiallye life-threatening. HBV can be transmitted through exposure to blood and other infectious body fluids and tissues. The infections can cause both acute and chronic diseases, primarily involving a person's liver. The best defense against Hepatitis B is vaccination.

Procedures:
Adapted for PTSMC in conjunction with OSHA Rules and Regulations.
1.) PTSMC deems all clinicians could be of potential occupational exposure to Hepatitis B virus.
2.) All new clinicians will be offered the Hepatitis B vaccine within 10 days of employment. Unless the employee has previously received that Hepatitis B vaccine, has had antibody testing revealing the employee is immune or the vaccine is contraindicated for medical reasons, it is expected the clinician will begin the vaccination process.
3.) New clinicians are required to complete a Hepatitis B Vaccination Informed Consent and Waiver.
4.) A clinician offered the vaccine, who chooses not to accept it, must sign a waiver form stating that the vaccine has been offered and refused.
5.) Records of employee vaccinations or copies of waivers will be maintained with the Human Resources department.

HIV/AIDS
Information:
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is transmitted through sexual contact and exposure to infected blood or blood components, as well as prenatally from mother to neonate. Use of Universal Precautions is the best method of prevention of transmission in the clinic.

Employees with AIDS:
PTSMC will not test potential or current employees for HIV. The AIDS virus will be treated as any other life threatening illness. Confidentiality will be respected and eligibility for benefits will remain consistent. An employee with AIDS may continue working as they choose, provided PTSMC can "reasonably accommodate" their desire to work. Job modifications will be made if possible.

Pandemic Diseases

Information:

A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a disease that occurs when a new type of virus appears that people have not been exposed to before or have not been exposed to in a long time. The pandemic virus can cause serious illness because people do not have immunity to the new virus. A pandemic will last much longer than most outbreaks and may include "waves" of disease activity that last 6-8 weeks separated by months. (www.pandemicflu.gov) The most typical pandemic disease is influenza.

PTSMC Procedures for Phases of Pandemics:

A pandemic is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) in terms of six phases of impact on the human population. In the event that any phases between 4 and 6 are in effect, PTSMC will take various precautions as stated below.

Phase 1	Interpandemic phase	Low risk of human cases
Phase 2	New virus in animals, no human cases	Higher risk of human cases
Phase 3	Pandemic Alert	No or very limited human- to- human transmission
During phases 1-3 there will be no changes to existing PTSMC policies and practices.		
Phase 4	Pandemic Alert	Evidence of increase human-to-human transmission in clusters and small communities
Phase 5	New virus causes human cases	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission taking place in 2 separate countries
Phase 6	Pandemic	Increased and sustained transmission in the general population
During phases 4-6 the following precautions will be instituted: • The use of hygiene/ social distancing guidelines will be mandated. • Standard sick pay and/or short term disability practices will apply. • Family medical leave mandated by PTSMC policy or law will apply.		

If an employee is confirmed or suspected to have a pandemic or infectious disease, proper precautions will take place until symptoms have resolved. For example, if an employee is confirmed or believed to have H1N1 virus (also known as Swine Flu) then they are considered by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) to be contagious from the first day of symptoms, up until 7 days following illness onset. All employees who may have been in contact with a confirmed case will be monitored and will follow both the hygiene and social distancing procedures, and environmental infection control procedures.

Summary of PTSMC Infectious and Pandemic Disease Policy:

PTSMC will not discriminate against an employee based on the individual or member of his or her family having or having had a pandemic or infectious disease. PTSMC will not deny any employee access to the workplace exclusively on the grounds that an employee may have or have had a pandemic or infectious disease.

However, PTSMC has other employees' and patients' health to consider as well, which is why the organization reserves the right to require potentially infected employees to undergo medical testing. Depending on the infectious or pandemic disease in question PTSMC will make sure to understand the symptoms to look for and help employees that are seeking medical assistance.

If PTSMC requests an employee to get tested, PTSMC will pay for any costs associated with the test. Upon results, PTSMC will treat the test results as confidential. If an employee tests positive for an infectious or pandemic disease then it is PTSMC's job to disclose the positive test result; however, under the ADA (American Disabilities Act) the positively tested employee's name will remain private.