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SHEA News

THE SOCIETY FOR HOSPITAL EPIDEMIOLOGY OF AMERICA

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Requirements for Infection Control Education and Practice Compliance Established for Physicians and Other Healthcare Workers in Minnesota

In the spring of 1992, following the July 1991 Centers for Disease Control recommendations, the Minnesota Legislature passed a number of infection control requirements. These include adopting rules for education in infection control, setting state standards for infection control procedures, practice inspections to determine compliance with control procedures, an explicit statement of the potential for disciplinary or restrictive actions, and mandatory reporting by healthcare workers of their colleagues' failures to comply with infection control procedures related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or hepatitis B virus (HBV) transmission. These laws were effective by July 1, 1992.

The infection control requirements apply to certain licensees and registrants of five licensing boards: medical practice, dentistry, nursing, podiatry, and chiropractic. These boards have come to be known informally within the state as the "blood boards." The boards have formed a steering committee that includes a health department representative. The steering committee oversees infection control matters and regulations regarding HIV-infected persons and e-antigen positive HBV carriers. For these healthcare workers, the steering committee will establish an expert advisory committee that will conduct a case-by-case assessment of such individuals.

Regarding rules for infection control procedures, an Infection Control Rules Program has been established with a full-time staff person. The steering committee has appointed a 27-member advisory committee to this program. The members include nine physicians, four of whom direct hospital infection control programs. Two are SHEA members. The committee also includes four nurses with extensive hospital infection control experience. The steering committee intends to adopt rules by December 1, 1993 with board approval and rule publication in 1994.

The infection control education section states that the relevant boards "shall require by rule that licensees obtain instruction or continuing education in the subject of infection control including bloodborne diseases." Earlier drafts of the legislation had been more specific, requiring that 10% of clock hours required for relicensure be devoted to infection control. However, the professional organizations pointed out that such restrictions, when placed in law, become hard to modify and that a precedent might be established that could lead to excessive regulation of professional education.

SHEA Annual Luncheon

The Society for Hospital Epidemiology of America will host its Annual Luncheon during the Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC) in New Orleans at the Hilton Riverside and Towers on Tuesday, October 19, 1993, from 12:00 to 2:00 PM. The featured luncheon speaker will be Michael P. Osterholm, PhD, MPH, State Epidemiologist and Chief, Minnesota Department of Health. The title of his talk is "Partners in Pump Handles." Also featured at this luncheon will be an update of SHEA's activities. Come to the luncheon and bring a guest. Nonmembers are welcome. The cost for SHEA members preregistered by September 18, 1993, is $30, and the cost for nonmembers is $35 if preregistered by the same date. The cost for registration after September 18 is $40. To register for the luncheon, write to SHEA Annual Luncheon, 875 Rings Highway, Suite 200, Woodbury, NJ 08096. Telephone (609) 8451636. FAX (609) 853-0411.

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