

SARS Provincial Operations Centre

April 18, 2003

Communication regarding clinical placements for students during SARS outbreaks

The issue of clinical placements for students during the current SARS outbreak has been raised by a number of organizations, in particular by nursing groups. Clarification has been requested around the appropriate timing of re-introduction of students into facilities as outlined in the SARS Provincial Operations Centre Directives. The discussion can be summarized as follows:

While the final decision to reintegrate students should be at the discretion of the individual organization, depending on individual capacities and needs, it is recognized that students have valuable skills and knowledge to contribute to healthcare delivery. It is expected that senior students have acquired a degree of experience in applying infection control principles, and that it would be most appropriate to reintegrate these upper year students into the facility (e.g. third and fourth year BScN students and final semester Respiratory Therapy students) as a first priority.

It is also recognized that restricting clinical time could negatively impact on the completion of clinical requirements and graduation, as well as create a backlog of clinical placements required for future semesters. Facilities must balance their decision-making regarding accommodation of student placements with the knowledge that students will graduate and become an important addition to the workforce.

The ministries of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Health and Long-Term Care are working with colleges, universities, the Michener Institute and other educational institutions and training programs, to assess the impacts and develop strategies that will support students to complete their clinical training with minimal disruption.

For details on current protocols, please refer to the Directives:

- The Directives referring to “Valid reasons for entry to the facility” should be interpreted to include students on clinical placements.

- Category 1 or Category 0 facilities may return to normal activity level regarding student placements at their discretion.
- Category 2 facilities should continue to restrict students to unaffected areas of the facility.
- Category 3 facilities should not allow student placements.

Dr. James G. Young
Commissioner of
Public Security

Dr. Colin D’Cunha
Commissioner of
Public Health and Chief Medical
Officer of Health