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IS1100: Rabies

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 2006

REVISED DATE: November 2010

REVIEWED DATE:

1.0 PURPOSE

To prevent transmission of Rabies to patients and staff.
To provide guidance to healthcare workers on how to report a case of rabies.

2.0 DEFINITION

Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes. Domestic animals account for less than 10% of the reported rabies cases, with cats, cattle, and dogs most often reported rabid.

Rabies virus infects the central nervous system, causing encephalopathy and ultimately death. Early symptoms of rabies in humans are nonspecific, consisting of fever, headache, and general malaise. As the disease progresses, neurological symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation, difficulty swallowing, and hydrophobia (fear of water). If vaccinations to prevent disease are not administered before the onset of symptoms, death is almost certain.

2.1. Infectious Period

- Depends on animal. Cats and dogs are infectious 3-7 days prior to symptoms.

2.2. Transmission

- Virus-laden saliva of rabid animal introduced through a scratch or bite. Person to Person transmission is theoretically possible, but rare and not well documented. Organ transplants of persons dying of undiagnosed CNS disease have lead to transmission of rabies.

3.0 PROCEDURE

3.1. Routine Practices only. No isolation required.

3.2. Reporting

- Contact Infection Control.
If Infection Control is not available then please contact Public Health. The Medical Health Officer of Health must be notified as Rabies is a Reportable Communicable Disease.
[REFER TO IS0100 – REPORTABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES](#)

3.3. Prophylaxis

- Please review the following BCCDC document.

4.0 REFERENCE

[See B.C. Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) for Rabies Protocol](#) (July 2009):