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Applicability UNC Medical Center

Special Pathogen Unit (SPU) Activation

I. Description

This policy describes the procedures for activation of the Special Pathogen Unit (SPU) at UNC Hospitals. The SPU is a part of the Special Pathogens Response Center (SPARC) at UNC. The SPU serves as a specialized unit within the Medicine Intensive Care Unit (MICU) designed to safely isolate and care for patients with known or suspected special pathogens. Activation of the SPU ensures the protection of staff, patients, and the surrounding environment from potential biohazards.

II. Policy

A. Scope

The SPU follows a set of protocols for activating the unit in the event of a patient with a suspected or known special pathogen. The SPU must be prepared for a wide range of infectious agents, and protocols exist to respond as appropriate based on the agent and clinical presentation of the patient.

Special pathogens can be defined, and include, but are not limited to the following:

- Viral Hemorrhagic Fever (such as Ebola disease (EBOD), Marburg disease (MVOD), Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), Lassa fever (LF)) capable of person-to-person transmission.
- MERS/SARS[SN1] -CoV-1: Airborne disease with high mortality and demonstrated transmission in a healthcare facility.
- Smallpox

- Henipavirus (Nipah virus)
- Other special pathogens or novel pathogens deemed to be highly communicable and hazardous by NC state epidemiologists and/or CDC.

B. Activation Criteria

1. The decisions to activate the SPU will be at the discretion of the SPU and MICU Medical Directors, the SPARC program manager, and in conjunction with the Infection Prevention Director and Medical Director, and the NC Department of Health. UNC Hospital executive Leadership will be consulted for the final decision to accept a patient and activate the unit. Decisions will be based on the following criteria:
 - a. Identification of a patient with a suspected or confirmed case of a special pathogen that requires specialized biocontainment capabilities.
 - The patient must have a history of travel to a location with an ongoing outbreak or contact with a person positive for the outbreak agent, plus symptoms consistent with the outbreak agent.
 - b. Activation may occur due to a patient with a direct admission or admission of a patient via the Emergency Department.
 - c. All patients, regardless of age or acuity, will be admitted to the SPU within the MICU.
2. Activation of the unit should occur due to public health emergencies in which there is a great risk to the public (e.g., high consequence special pathogens).
3. The unit will be operational within 8 hours of notification

C. Notification

1. The SPU medical director will contact the following individuals upon notice of activation:
 - a. **Program Manager for SPU:** the SPU medical director will inform the program manager of the SPU of the infectious disease for which the unit is being activated, the level of acuity and age of the patient, and the estimated arrival time of the patient.
 - b. **NC Department of Health and Human Services Epidemiologist On-Call:** (919)733-3419. The medical director will notify the State Epidemiologist on-call of the unit activation.
 - c. **Carolina Air Care:** The SPU medical director will notify the medical director on-call for Carolina Air Care if patient transport to UNC is required.

2. The SPU program manager (or designee) will contact the following individuals/ departments upon notice of activation:
 - a. **Infection Preventionist (IP) On-Call:** The IP on-call will notify the nursing house supervisor who will notify the Patient Logistics Center (PLC).
 - The Public Health Epidemiologist (PHE) in Infection Prevention will notify the Orange County Health Department during normal business hours.
 - b. **MICU Charge RN:** The Charge RN will notify the MICU nurse manager and Environmental Services manager for their area. The Charge RN will also call Central Distribution to request the “Ebola cart”.
 - c. **Nurse Staffing Office:** The nurse staffing office will be notified that the SPU RN on-call will be pulled out of their regular assignment to activate the unit. The staffing office will also ensure the SPU has appropriate staffing for the next shift.
 - d. **Emergency Management Department:** The Emergency Manager will be notified of the activation of the unit and will activate the Incident Management Team (IMT).
 - e. **McLendon Clinical Microbiology Laboratory:** The microbiology lab director on-call will be notified that the SPU laboratory space will be activated with unit activation.
 - f. **Occupational Health Service (OHS):** The OHS medical director and nurse manager will be notified to begin symptom tracking of all staff who provide direct patient care.
 - g. **Hospitals Police:** Hospitals police will be notified due to the increased need for security presence.
 - h. **Plant Engineering:** Plant engineering will be notified and will install temporary barriers in the SPU.
 - i. **SPARC Research Coordinator:** The research coordinator will be notified to start the process for obtaining appropriate Emergency Investigational New Drugs (EIND) for the disease process applicable to the admitting patient.

D. Space

1. Beds 4303 and 4304 in the MICU will be used initially for the activation of the SPU. The patient will be placed in 4303
2. Beds 4301 and 4302 will be used as needed for SPU operations

III. Responsible for Content

Special Pathogen Unit (SPU) Program Manager

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Kimberly Novak-Jones: Nurse Educator	01/2024
	Thomas Ivester: CMO/VP Medical Affairs	12/2023
	Emily Vavalle: Dir Epidemiology	11/2023
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Applicability

UNC Medical Center

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