

# Guidelines for Pregnant Veterinary Medical Students

The potential for injury to humans always exists in the practice of veterinary medicine, and increases whenever an involved student is pregnant. The greatest hazards are accidents that occur while working with animal patients and may cause physical trauma to the pregnant woman or to her unborn child. Additional hazards exist through exposure to formaldehyde, anesthetic and pharmaceutical agents, infectious/toxic agents or radiation. Such exposure can interfere with normal fetal development.

## **Any pregnant student enrolled in the School of Veterinary Medicine should:**

- Contact a physician to get a recommendation for a plan to minimize exposure to the hazards that may be associated with a veterinary student's assignments.
- Provide a signed statement from the physician which defines permitted limits of exposure to possible hazards during pregnancy.
- In writing, inform the administration of the SVM, Director of the UHC, and the DOS, of their pregnancy as early as possible, and state their decision relative to continuing in their course of study.

The SVM and SGU will attempt to provide an expectant student with the option of continuing their course of study under an individualized program of study if they so desire. If the student's coursework is such that they are enrolled in didactic coursework, the decision whether to remain enrolled is one they and their physician can independently make.

If the student is or will be enrolled in coursework involving laboratory or clinical training experience during their pregnancy, the SGU DOS Office will

- Provide to the student a list of the potential risks involved in all such laboratory activities for the student to use when meeting with their healthcare provider, so that they can make an informed decision about the risks/benefits of their decision to remain enrolled in the program.
- Request written documentation of the accommodations and personal protective equipment recommended by the physician for the protection of the expectant student and unborn child.
- Notify the student's Course Directors and/or clinical sites of the pregnancy and either receive the approvals to provide the needed accommodations or reschedule such activities until the child's birth. In this case, the student will be notified that the projected educational program completion date will likely be delayed.
- Arrange a meeting with the student, the SGUSVM Associate/Assistant Dean of Students, and the Director of the UHC to clarify, in writing, all matters related to the risks/benefits and decision involved, if requested, by the student or deemed appropriate by the SGU DOS or the Director of the UHC.
- Through the Associate/Assistant Dean of Year 4 Clinical Training, liaise with appropriate authorities at the affiliated school.

These guidelines are intended to allow the pregnant student to make an informed decision about the risks and benefits of continuing the program while pregnant.

It is in the best interests of pregnant students to maintain regular contact with their physicians/health care providers and to take appropriate steps to minimize exposure to hazards inherent to veterinary medical education and the veterinary profession. Notification to the SVM of pregnancy is not mandatory, but effective steps to address risks cannot be taken unless the student provides this notice.

**Rights and Responsibilities:**

It is recognized that the pregnant student has rights and the responsibility for decisions concerning their pregnancy. The student should expect due consideration from everyone associated with them during their pregnancy, whatever their decision may be. At the same time, any pregnant student is expected to complete each and every requirement of the veterinary curriculum by a schedule or plan that can be reasonably implemented and under which risks are deemed acceptable by them and their physician.