I. PRINCIPLE

Personal electronic devices pose a unique risk to those in the clinical laboratory by acting as a reservoir for bacteria and biohazardous material. Using these devices in the lab creates a potential hazard regarding transfer of infectious material outside of the laboratory.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, non-students, and staff at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee that utilize restricted areas in the Department of Biomedical Sciences teaching labs in which there is a reasonable risk of exposure to biohazardous material. Restricted areas containing possible biohazardous material include B70, B76, B78, B80, B86, B88, and B90.

III. TRAINING

All staff and students that expect to work unsupervised in the BMS teaching labs must review this procedure, complete training by Lab Manager or PI, and fill out the Personal Electronic Devices in the Laboratory Training Certification Log.

See BMS 1.0 Utilization of Space and Supplies for guidelines on unsupervised student access to BMS teaching laboratories.

IV. PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

A. Personal electronic devices are pieces of equipment that are not owned by the department and/or kept in the biomedical laboratories, and are typically brought to and from the labs by a student or staff member. These items are manipulated with the hands, and use often includes placing the device close to the face and mucous membranes. Personal electronic devices with restricted use guidelines include but are not limited to:
    a. Cellular telephones
    b. Portable music players (i.e. MP3 players and iPods)
    c. Headphones
    d. Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)
    e. Tablet computers (iPads, Kindle, etc.)
    f. Laptop Computers
    g. Personal calculators

V. USE OF PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

A. It is the responsibility of the instructor or supervising department member to enforce restrictions and provide information on the risks associated with the use of personal electronic devices while working in the laboratory. Use of these devices should not be allowed in the following situations:
   a. Any time chemicals, hazardous materials, or biohazardous materials are being used in the laboratory.
      i. Biohazardous materials include but are not limited to blood and blood products, test reagents, semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, microbiological cultures, and any primary specimen.
   b. While wearing gloves, regardless if gloves have touched any item that may be contaminated with potentially infectious material.
   c. In any situation where use of device would create a potential safety hazard due to distraction of user or other staff and students in laboratory.

B. At the discretion of the instructor, any student found in violation of this policy may be given a verbal warning or written up using a BMS Safety Violation Notice. These forms will be forwarded to the Program Director and kept in the student file.

VI. REFERENCES

A. Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI). Clinical Laboratory Safety; Approved Guidelines – Third Addition. CLSI document GP17-A3, section 5.5.3.1 Personal Electronic Devices.

VII. POLICY NOTES

A. Electronic devices should not be used in place of laboratory manuals or notebooks without approval of the instructor or supervising department member, and must be properly decontaminated with disinfectant or 10% bleach solution if use is necessary.

B. Cell phones should never be used as calculators, timers, or to find reference materials while working in the lab, as students often place phones on counter and use while wearing gloves. Calculators and timers are provided to students for use in the lab, and university computer labs are open to students prior to and after class time.

C. Due to the integration of cellphones in to everyday life, this policy may be difficult to enforce at all times in the laboratory. It is important to stress the hazards associated with use of these devices in the laboratory, and encourage students to wash their hands prior to touching any devices that they will bring home with them.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

Safety Violation Notice (BMS)

SAFE 4.0.A Personal Electronic Devices in the Laboratory Training Certification Log