



American University of the Caribbean

Medical School

Policy on Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Like all other responsible institutions of higher education, the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine is actively committed to the prevention of the use of illicit drugs and the abuse of alcohol and to the principle of the drug-free workplace and campus. This commitment is especially important in a school devoted to the professional education of future physicians who are expected to be role models for the wider community in their attitudes and behavior towards drug and alcohol use, and are yet at the same time a group at high risk of substance abuse problems.

All students, faculty and staff of the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine are expected to familiarize themselves with the University's policy and to act in accordance with them. Section V of this policy statement describes sanctions which will be applied by the University to violators of this policy, as well as the sanctions provided for under the Laws of Sint Maarten.

1. Standards of Conduct

The following standards of conduct apply to all students, faculty and staff:

- No member of the University shall at any time possess, use or distribute any illicit substance, whether on University premises or elsewhere.
- No member of the University shall possess, use or distribute alcohol other than within the express limits of the law, and shall at no time display or be seen to display signs of public intoxication.
- No member of the University shall be intoxicated by alcohol or drugs or under the influence of illicit drugs when on University premises at any time, or when participating in any University activity either within or beyond University premises, whether as an employee or as a student.

II. Legal Sanctions

The Laws of Sint Maarten do not allow for possession, use or sale of illegal substances and provide a scale of penalties for various different drug offences. **Possession of controlled drugs on or within 100 yards of any school premises is also automatically assumed to constitute trafficking.** It is also an offence to frequent a place used for the purpose of drug taking and to possess utensils used in connection with illicit drug taking.

III. Health Risks

The health risks associated with and resulting from the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs are both common and numerous. The following is only a partial list of the disorders which are likely to result from substance abuse:

a. Alcohol - Alcohol use is the major risk factor for road accidents and is a major factor in accidents at work and at home and also in drownings. It is a major risk factor for various cancers, for suicide and homicide; it causes cirrhosis of the liver, pancreatitis, gastritis, hepatic failure, hypertension, delirium, hallucinations, major motor seizures, and Korsakoff's syndrome (Alcohol Amnestic Disorder) among other diseases.

b. Cocaine - Cocaine, particularly in its common "crack" form, produces a rapid progression to a severe addiction in which the pleasurable effects of the drug decrease while the craving for it becomes extreme. Attempts to withdraw from cocaine may produce a depression of suicidal intensity which may last for months. It may produce agitation, nausea, vomiting, anorexia, chills, seizures, cardiac arrhythmias and respiratory paralysis, resulting in death.

c. Amphetamines - Amphetamines and other stimulant drugs may produce a loss of contact with reality, violent and aggressive behavior, paranoia, social and occupational impairment, accidents, and seizures.

d. Sedative-Hypnotic Drugs (tranquilizers etc.) - These drugs have a depressant effect on the central nervous system and can produce coma or even death, particularly in combination with alcohol. Tolerance may build up so that severe addictions may occur, and attempts to withdraw from these drugs can then produce convulsions, seizures and death.

e. Inhalants, (gasoline, glue, paint thinners etc.) - Inhalants produce assaultiveness, belligerence, dizziness, renal and hepatic complications, and may cause death due to central nervous system depression and cardiac arrhythmia.

f. Heroin - Heroin is commonly injected intravenously, and like all injectable drugs of abuse, carries with it a high risk of HIV infection and subsequent development of AIDS. Heroin (and morphine, opium and other similar opiate drugs) produces impaired judgment and interferes with social and occupational functioning, and may also produce nausea, vomiting, coma, shock, depressed respiration and death.

g. Cannabis (marijuana) - Cannabis produces sedation, impaired judgment and orientation; as such it may significantly impair the ability to drive or use machinery safely. Paranoia and panic attacks occur in some users. It has also been demonstrated to reduce blood levels of testosterone, thus affecting sperm production in men. It has also been found to produce chromosomal damage and mutagenic and teratogenic effects in animals.

h. PCP ("Angel Dust") - PCP and other similar substances are often contaminated with other substances with unpredictable effects. Even in their pure form, they produce belligerence, agitation, seizures, vomiting and paranoia. Suicide during intoxication with PCP is not uncommon. Respiratory arrest and a hypertensive crisis may also occur, followed by coma and death.

i. LSD and other hallucinogens - By their nature, hallucinogens produce a loss of contact with reality with potentially very dangerous results. In addition, users may experience a Posthallucinogen Perception Disorder, in which the drug produces episodic hallucinations for months or years after it was taken. LSD may also impair learning ability, memory and problem-solving ability.

IV. Counseling, Treatment and Rehabilitation

Any member of the University who abuses or feels he or she is at risk of abusing alcohol or any other drug, or who is affected by the substance abuse problems of family members, friends or co-workers, is encouraged to meet with the University Wellness Counselor who has office hours each day. Any request for counseling or disclosures made during the course of counseling will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be revealed to any other member of the University or entered on any student's or employee's record. Exceptions to this rule of confidentiality will be made only with the permission of the person seeking counseling or in the case where clear harm to specific persons can be specifically prevented by the breaking of confidence.

The University Wellness Counselor may refer members of the University to local physicians, to physicians in the members' home communities or to the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous, which meets at different locations on Sint Maarten at 6 P.M. each evening. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs and University Wellness Counselor keeps a file of local chapter meetings of AA in Sint Maarten.

V. Sanctions Applicable to Individuals Violating these Standards of Conduct

The University, according to the severity of the violation, the individual's motivation to change his behavior, and the mental and physical health status of the individual, may apply a range of sanctions. Violation of these standards ultimately constitutes grounds for termination of employment (in the case of faculty and staff) or expulsion from the University (in the case of students). It is, however, the University's intention to use these sanctions only as a last resort in the case of severe violations or in the case of individuals who appear to be unable or unwilling to modify their behavior.

Students, faculty or staff may be required to participate in counseling and/or medical treatment and may be required (for example) to attend meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous or other similar organizations as a condition of continued enrollment or employment.

The University may refuse to promote students who violate these policies to the clinical clerkship program, especially if it appears that a student's ability to function as a responsible professional caring for the health and lives of other people may potentially be impaired. The decision to promote or expel students is made in accordance with the University's Administrative Review and Grievance Procedures.

The University has the right to notify the police or immigration authorities of any violation or suspected violation of the law with respect to drugs or alcohol, and is committed to doing so in the case of repetitive and deliberate violations of the law and in cases involving the importation, distribution and sale of illicit substances. Legal sanctions applicable under the Laws of Sint Maarten are outlined in section II above.

VI. Review of These Policies

The University's Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention will review the implementation, effectiveness and enforcement of these policies each semester. All students, faculty and staff of the University are invited to make their comments and suggestions regarding improvements in this policy known to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for consideration at the next meeting of this Committee.