



Student Handbook

This student handbook is designed as a reference to assist you with your decision to register and prepare for a Wilderness Medicine Training Center International medical course. Pre-course curriculum questions should be addressed by email to office@wildmedcenter.com. Curriculum questions during a course should be directed to the course instructor(s). Logistical and site questions should be addressed directly to the course sponsor.

Course Types

We have two course formats: our standard course format and our two-part hybrid course format; both are reviewed below. Tuition includes copies of our Patient SOAP notes (for training and documentation) and our Wilderness Medicine Handbook (a waterproof, tear-resistant field manual). *All our courses have a "No refund unless the course is canceled" policy.*

Standard Courses

Standard courses are taught completely on-site at the specified Sponsor's location. There are no prerequisites for any of our core standard courses; you must have a current WFR or WEMT certification to attend a recertification course. Lectures, skill labs, simulations, and case study reviews are scheduled throughout the course and, as a result, are longer than the practical session of our hybrid courses.

Hybrid Courses

Our hybrid courses are divided into two distinct parts, you must complete both parts within a year of registering for Part 1 to receive certification: Part 1 + Part 2 = Certification. You must register separate for each part; and, you must complete Part 1 in order to register for Part 2.

The Part 1 Independent Study section provides the foundation for the Part 2 Practical Session and is presented entirely online with minimal or no instructor contact. Students can complete the Independent Study from wherever they can access the course website. Students learn the wilderness medicine curriculum at their own pace through multimedia presentations, the Wilderness Medicine Handbook, case studies, SOAP Notes, and testing. Access to the course website and online tests are sent to registered students via email from our office upon registration and payment; complete directions are on the home page of the course website. If you have registered and paid for Part 1 of a hybrid course and did not receive your login information, please contact our office.

The Part 2 Practical Session is taught in-person. It is facilitated by expert instructors who clarify and reinforce the Part 1 Independent Study information with skill labs, simulations, and case study reviews. Because there may be a large gap between the time a student completes Part 1 and begins Part 2, you will receive access to an online Review test two-weeks before the start of their practical session. The review test is designed to refresh key concepts learned during the Independent Study. While the test is not graded, it does reflect how well you understand the information. Students may review their Part 1 tests and will continue to have access to the course website through the practical session.

In-person instruction in both formats is augmented, as necessary, through the use of a large whiteboard (or overhead projector depending on the class size), dry-erase posters, full-sized anatomical torso, full-sized skeleton, symptomatic “acting” by the course instructors, case study summations, and case study quizzes.

What to Bring

Please bring the following supplies and equipment to your course; note that the course sponsor may ask you to bring additional supplies.

- Two 3-ply cotton or cotton/polyester cloth face covers or a 2-ply cover with a replaceable filter. Face coverings (masks) made of stretchy or lightweight material and those with a built-in exhalation valves are not permitted.
- Goggles or wraparound glasses (with side protection).
- A watch or smartphone capable of measuring seconds (for taking patient vital signs during simulations)
- Cuttable simulation clothing: 2 T-shirts, 2 long-sleeved shirts, 2 pair of long pants, and a pair of heavy socks (DO NOT short this list! ALL the listed clothing IS REQUIRED for effective practice during simulations and labs. Clothing can usually be purchased cheaply through Goodwill, Salvation Army, local thrift store, church, yard sale or secondhand stores. Ask clerk for rejects and throw-aways)
- Water shoes (to protect feet during water simulations and skill labs)
- Notebook or paper (for taking notes)
- Colored pens or pencils (your instructors will use different colored markers during lectures, case study reviews, and discussions to help organize the material on a white board or SOAP poster; some students find it EXTREMELY helpful to do the same in their notes)
- Two pencils and a pocket sharpener (for writing in the rain on weatherproof patient SOAP notes during simulations)
- Old clothing (to wear during skill labs; you WILL get dirty and may NOT want to wear your expensive outdoor gear)
- A small backpack (to wear during simulations)
- Insect repellent (DEET/Picaridin) and spray insecticide (Permethrin) as dictated by the course site and season.
- A wide-mouth water bottle (for use during simulations and some labs)
- A headlamp (for night simulations; this is especially important during late fall and winter courses)

Registration

You will have two forms to complete prior to or during registration; all forms are on-line. Your name and course information will be entered into our database; your contact information is used only if we need to reach you. If you are registered for Part 1 or Part 2 of a hybrid course, your name and email will be used to set up your user account with our online testing software. Your information is kept on file for a minimum of three years.

Site & Sponsor Information

The course sponsor and/or site host will have information and guidelines they would like you to follow during the course. If these are not included in your pre-course packet or readily available upon arrival at the course site, please ask the course sponsor. In most cases you and your fellow students will be responsible for keeping the classroom clean and neat during your course. Please cooperate with everyone and your course will be MUCH more pleasurable.

Course Materials

Make sure you have all the required materials for your course. While not included in the cost of your course, all students who own a smartphone or tablet are encouraged to purchase a digital handbook (app) from our webstore. The digital handbook contains significantly more information than the print handbook and includes free updates for life.

Standard course students will receive all their course materials on Day 1 of their course.

Most Part 1 hybrid course students will receive their materials, including login to their online tests within a week of registering and paying for their course. Remember you must complete Part 1 of a hybrid course before you can register for Part 2. We recommend you register for and complete Part 1 early to ensure that the Part 2 practical session you would like to take has open spots.

Below is a list of materials included in your course tuition.

- You may—and should—download a course syllabus (all courses) from the course page on wildmedcenter.com. The syllabus is a guideline and subject to change based on student needs during the course. *As you make your travel plans etc., please keep in mind that you must be present and engaged during the entire course in order to be eligible for certification; if for any reason what-so-ever you miss a portion of and in-person course, you will not receive a full 3-year certification. Depending on the time and content of the missed session(s) and your demonstrated skill level, your instructor may award you a shorter or lower level certification, or no certification. Plan accordingly. We cannot be and are not responsible for you missing part of a course.*
- Access to the Part 1 course website and online tests. Upon receipt of your registration and confirmation of payment, you will receive an email from our office with access information to both the course website and your online tests. It is important that you confirm your access information as soon as you receive it. Directions on how to prepare for the tests are on the course website.
- Wilderness Medicine Handbook (standard and Part 1 hybrid courses). As soon as you receive your new handbook, put your name on the cover in an obvious place using a permanent marker.
- Patient SOAP Notes (all courses). During standard and Part 2 hybrid courses, paper

SOAP notes are used for case study homework; Part 1 hybrid students receive access to an interactive pdf file SOAP note.

Contact the course sponsor and the WMTC office if you registered for a Part 1 hybrid course and do not receive access to the course website, your online tests, and a handbook.

First Aid Supplies

Supplies will be provided for each lab unless otherwise noted in the pre-course literature. You are responsible for returning course equipment in good condition and you are responsible for loss or damage beyond general wear and tear.

Goals & Responsibilities for In-person Courses

All WMTC courses are intense learning experiences. Both you and your instructors should share the following goals:

- Mastery of material
- Focused and fun
- Shared time management

In order to reach these goals everyone will need to work together. Because of the block nature of most WMTC medical courses, there will be limited “free” time. Please come well-rested and having completed all the pre-course assignments.

Understanding your role as a student and the role of your instructors will help put your course into perspective and help you to take an active role in learning the course material. You are responsible for adhering to our COVID protocols established by the sponsor in conjunction with WMTC at all times.

Instructor Responsibilities:

- Present the lecture material clearly.
- Give clear demonstrations.
- Design and manage effective PAS exercises and video simulations.
- Assist students as necessary outside of class as time permits without losing personal balance. Some instructors will elect to schedule one-on-one time, others will schedule optional “Question & Answer” sessions for the entire class. Remember that your instructors are responsible for presenting material to the entire class and have personal needs of their own. Please be sensitive to their needs.
- Be open to feedback.
- Shared time management. Course instructors are NOT “time” police. Please come a few minutes early to every presentation.

Student Responsibilities:

- BE ON TIME (students may choose time police from the class; if used “police” should rotate on a regular basis and include all students). If you are consistently late to class, you may not be eligible for certification and in some instances may be asked to leave the class.
- Ask effective questions (more on this later).
- Do all the assigned homework.

- Practice all practical skills to mastery.
- Attend ALL sessions; complete attendance and focus is required to pass the course. *You must be present and engaged the entire course in order to be eligible for certification; if for any reason what-so-ever you miss a portion of the course, you will not receive a full 3-year certification. Depending on the time and content of the missed portion(s) and your demonstrated skill level, your instructor may award you a shorter or lower level certification.*
- Bring the required material to each session.
- Be open to instructor feedback.
- Take responsibility for your learning. Ask for assistance if you need it; it is unrealistic to rely on your instructors to recognize and provide for all your needs during the course.

Questions

You will likely have a number of questions en route to mastery of the course material. Questions are a double-edged sword. Clear, well-timed questions usually benefit everyone. Poorly thought out or poorly timed questions often confuse the issue further while taking valuable class time. The following information will hopefully give you some insight and prepare you to ask effective questions. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO REMEMBER ALL THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THE COURSE. In fact, this is impossible. It is vital for your sanity to realize that the important information is repeated again and again as the course progresses. First in lecture (Standard courses) or via home study and online testing (DLP courses), again in skills sessions, then again in homework and quizzes, and finally in multiple simulations. While it may not be important to remember all the details of a topic it IS important to understand the concepts behind each topic as your instructor is speaking.

Hints for Asking Effective Questions:

- Thoroughly study the material prior to the start of your course or practical session. The evening prior to a lecture, skills lab, or simulation write down any questions you may have from your study and listen closely for the answers during next day's presentation.
- PLEASE DO NOT verbally interrupt an instructor as they are speaking; wait until you are called upon. In most cases, your instructor will pause numerous times during each lecture, demo, or review and ask for questions. Interrupting your instructor while they are speaking may throw off their thought process and detract from the presentation or demo.
- Write important questions down to make sure they get answered. If they do not get answered during a presentation, raise them at the end. As a last resort, talk to your instructor privately outside of class.
- Hold all questions about topics that will be covered later. All the topics in the syllabus take more than a few minutes to present clearly. The order or progression of topics within each course have been given careful attention. Refer to the syllabus and avoid asking questions about topics that will be covered later. Relax and let the class unfold.
- PLEASE DO NOT ASK questions you think you know the answer to.
- Outside of class use class members and reference material to answer your own questions before asking an instructor.
- If you don't understand the basic concepts of what your instructor just said AND if

your question is crucial to your immediate understanding, please raise your hand and ask a clarifying question. An effective clarifying question should resolve your problem.

- PLEASE DO NOT ASK questions where you change the mechanism of injury or illness (MOI) or specific questions about how to evacuate a patient. These questions usually begin with the words "What If". Questions where you need to change the MOI to understand the topic usually conceal a clarifying question. Rethink and rephrase before asking this type of question. Specific evacuation questions are scene specific and can only be answered in context. Instead, focus on the understanding the medical window and how that relates to the problem and its treatment. Focus on when to evacuate and the evacuation window rather than how to evacuate. If you ask a "What If" question, your instructor may choose not to answer it, may ask you to rephrase it as a clarifying question, or they may attempt to guess and answer the clarifying question that may or may not lie beneath your "What If" question. Needless-to-say, guessing the underlying clarifying question that addresses your confusion is a hit-or-miss proposition and many instructors will choose not to guess.
- PLEASE DO NOT PRESS FOR IN-CLASS ANSWERS about problems that rarely occur in a field setting. These types of problems are often referred to as medical zebras because it is rare to find zebras outside of a zoo; if you hear hoofbeats in the field it's usually a horse. While it is important to be aware of what problems are zebras, it's not worth class time to focus on them. If you ask a zebra question, your instructor will let you know that it is a zebra question and probably refer you to additional resources outside class (books, web, video, other courses, etc.).
- PLEASE DO NOT CONFRONT AN INSTRUCTOR DURING CLASS as this is usually detrimental to everyone concerned. If you have a problem with something an instructor has said please address it outside of class. Information taught in WMTC courses is based on practice guidelines published by the Wilderness Medical Society, the National Association of Emergency Medical System Physicians (NAEMSP), the American Heart Association (AHA), and the Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative (WMEC). These "Sacred Cow" questions often indicate resistance to course information usually due to miss-education or a different frame of reference. Try to understand the answer based on the pathophysiology of the problem.
- PLEASE DO NOT take it personally if an instructor asks you to hold a question until later. DO remember to write your question down and schedule a time to talk with your instructor.
- Most large classes (30+) are subdivided into smaller practical groups. Many of your questions will be better suited and easier to address in your practical group.

Course Structure

The purpose of formal lecture during standard courses and Part 1 of our hybrid website presentations is to provide the basic anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology necessary for you to understand how to evaluate, assess, and treat your patients.

Instructors in both course formats—standard and Part 2 hybrid practical sessions—commonly use stories to illustrate specific points especially when discussing a difficult topic. Please tell YOUR stories during a break or meal (NOT during class). If you think you have a valuable story for the whole class, please run it by your instructors. If they think it is valuable, they may ask you to present it to the entire class.

Standard Course Lectures

The outline for each topic is based on the Wilderness Medicine Handbook. Keep your handbook open and refer to it during every presentation. Ask questions on material that is not addressed. Each problem-based presentation begins with a brief review of MOI and the normal anatomy and physiology. From there the presentation progresses to problems and their associated pathophysiology. Signs, symptoms, and treatment emerge naturally from understanding the pathophysiology. Each change in MOI is introduced by the thought process used to evaluate it (Trauma, Environmental, or Medical). The format for each presentation leads you through the thought process again and again. This same thought process is used in the same manner during all simulation debriefs.

Your instructors may use animated movies, whiteboards, a full-sized skeleton and anatomical torso, and acting to help explain individual topics. Position yourself to see the material clearly. If your instructor writes something on a whiteboard it is because they believe it is important. If it's not in your handbook, you may wish to make separate notes. Remember to bring all your books to class, including a notebook.

Remember: you don't need to understand minute details when listening to or viewing a presentation. Focus on understanding the concepts. You will get lots of practice and review through homework, quizzes, and simulations.

Part 1 Hybrid Course Website Presentations & Tests

Pages on the Part 1 hybrid course websites address the lecture material covered in a standard course through text, animations, and videos; it is essentially an online textbook. Because you do not have access to an instructor during the Part 1 independent study portion of the course, the sites include case studies to check your understanding prior to taking the online tests. *Keep in mind that the online tests are both an educational tool as well as an evaluative tool. As such, they are challenging and few students pass on their first attempt.* There are two types of online tests: Content & Application tests and you can review tests you have already taken at any time.

Content tests are essentially a practice test; they tend to be easier than the Application tests and may only be taken once. You will receive answers to the Content test questions immediately after submitting them, and while the test is scored, the score doesn't count. That said, your score will give you an idea of how well you understand the material.

The Application test questions are all scenario-based and you need to score greater than 75% to pass a WFA exam or 80% to pass a WFA, WFR, or WEMT. You will be able to study for, take, and retake each Application test multiple times. That said, there is a limit to the number of times you may retake a given test. If you reach the test limit, please contact the WMTC office where one of our senior instructors will review your last test, send you detailed written feedback via email, and give you one final opportunity to take that test. You will have the opportunity to review your feedback and ask the instructor questions before taking the test again. If you fail the same Application test again, you may not continue with the course, attend the practical session, or receive a refund for the course; it's important that you know this. Keep in mind that historically 99.9% of the students who failed an Application test, received instructor feedback, and go on to take that test again, have passed that test.

While we provide a time range for the home study portion of each course, it is a rough estimate: You may require more or less time. To that end, it's important that you plan and schedule more time than the high end of the estimate to help ensure you can complete the home study portion and attend register for practical session. **If you have questions**

regarding our hybrid courses, please contact the WMTC office to discuss your concerns before you register for a course. *Remember, once you register for a course, there are no refunds unless the course is canceled.*

Touch

Depending on where you get your research, roughly 1/4 of females and 1/7 of males have been sexually assaulted in their lives. We assume that these or similar statistics hold true for our students. Some students will have had a sex change, or are thinking about transitioning. Touching genital areas without express permission is "forbidden" culturally and may be considered battery under United States law; exceptions are made for people responding to medical emergencies. At the same time, thorough bleeding checks, physical exams, and most treatment skills require students to touch one another and are a necessary part of learning pre-hospital medicine. These skills MUST be practiced in training before students can be expected to perform them in real-life scenarios. Being touched or touching others is uncomfortable but a necessary component of the learning process.

- You will be acting as both patients & rescuers; both roles involve touching. You must sign a release form acknowledging that you are responsible for your physical and emotional safety at all times.
- You are **REQUIRED** to wear underwear/shorts/jog bra etc. underneath all simulation clothing thus removing the actual "visualization" component of sensitive areas (breasts and genitals) and still working towards establishing a functional and appropriate medical habit/procedural memory.
- Prior to the start of each simulation, each student patient must give permission to their rescuers to touch sensitive areas during bleeding checks and physical exams **OR** tell your rescuers **NOT** to touch sensitive areas. If you are uncomfortable with a student touching you or touching another student, talk to your instructor. Your instructor will work with you resolve any issues. *Please keep in mind:* You must demonstrate your ability to stop bleeding, perform a good patient exam, take vital signs, perform a correct focused spine assessment, splint injuries, reduce simulated dislocations, apply good extremity splints, and lift, move, and package spine-injured patients during skill labs and simulations to pass the course and receive certification. *This will necessarily involve touching and being touched.*
- A thorough bleeding check requires a student rescuer to quickly look and feel for bleeding (all courses use simulated blood) and apply a pressure dressing and bandage. During this process the student rescuer will need to look under and potentially cut simulation clothing. Student rescuers should **NOT** cut underwear, jog bras, or protective shorts worn under a patient's simulation clothing; this clothing is worn to protect culturally sensitive areas.
- A thorough physical exam requires a student rescuer to squeeze their patient's rib cage from the front and side, touch a patient's abdomen in multiple places and bump against the pubic bone during an abdominal exam, squeeze and manipulate extremities to check for musculoskeletal injuries.
- *Please do not register for a course if you are unwilling to act as a patient or rescuer. Both are a required part of every WMTC medical course.*

Skills Labs

Like lectures, Skills Labs are a prerequisite for Simulations. Focus your questions on the skills being taught NOT detailed technical information. You should strive for a high level of

mastery of all the skills prior to using them during simulations. There will NOT be enough time during the lab for this to happen. You must practice on your own time to master each skill. Skills practice should take priority over case studies and reading during the evenings.

Simulations

Simulations are where you will learn the most and where everything comes together... or falls apart. There is value in both. You will make mistakes during simulations. Mistakes are part of the learning process. Your goal is to learn from your mistakes (and the mistakes of your fellow students). Ideally everything falls into place by the end of the course. Simulations begin on the first day as the Basic Life Support (BLS) Skills Lab leads into BLS Simulations. Presentations, skills labs, and simulations continue throughout the course. Each simulation gets progressively more difficult as the course progresses. Barring a technical malfunction, simulations in WFR & WEMT courses are videoed and reviewed. Simulations will ALWAYS take place outside in a realistic environment. While this may be overwhelming at first, you will gradually gain real mastery through this process as the course progresses.

There are four phases to each simulation: 1) patient briefing & make-up; 2) rescuer briefing; 3) execution, and 4) debrief. Descriptions of each stage follows.

1. Patient Briefing & Makeup:

Your instructor will review the entire scene with the patients before applying makeup en mass. They will demonstrate how to act and answer any questions. Finally they will position the patients. It typically takes 15-30 minutes for an instructor to complete this phase. Rescuers use this time to clean up if they were patients in a prior simulation, prepare their first aid kits and equipment, and review general assessment & treatment guidelines.

2. Rescuer Briefing:

Once the patients are ready the instructors will brief the rescuers en mass.

- General story and all visible MOI
- The size of the evacuation window
- The resources available
- When the exercise ends

3. Execution:

Everyone is responsible for their safety during the simulation. Anyone can call a time out for a safety reason. If a time out is called all activity should stop and the instructor consulted. Upon conclusion of the simulation, patients are usually given a few minutes to clean-up as their rescuers attend to the gear. Rescuers are required to complete and turn in for instructor review a full SOAP note on each patient.

4. Debrief:

Most simulations are debriefed en mass using a whiteboard and the WMTC SOAP posters. Video simulations—used only in the WFR & EMT courses—may also be debriefed in front of a television or LCD projector and screen.

General Guidelines for Simulations:

- You will be divided into groups of two or three for most simulations. Groups of three will be subdivided into a lead rescuer, an assistant rescuer, and a patient; groups of

two subdivide into a rescuer and patient. Stay in role unless there is a safety issue. You will rotate roles with each simulation. If enrollment dictates groups of two (or occasionally four), your instructor will either ask for volunteers or make an assignment.

- Rescuers are expected to bring a watch or smartphone, SOAP note, pens, a snack, water, a first aid kit, and, in some cases, sleeping bags, pads, and tarps, to each simulation.
- Instructors will tell the rescuers if their patient does not have a pulse or respirations.
- All patients must wear underwear, shorts, or a bathing suit underneath their cuttable simulation clothes.
- Patients should bring a day pack with food, water, and extra clothing to each exercise.
- You are responsible for your own emotional and physical safety at all times. If you feel threatened immediately call a time-out (stop the exercise) and then consult your instructor.
- Patients tell their rescuers their simulation pulses after the rescuer counts it.
- If you are in a group of three, the lead rescuer will do all the surveys themselves *and* write their own SOAP Notes. They are the primary person in charge of any splinting or spine management and should be directive with their assistant rescuers. Assistant rescuers must be told what to do by the lead rescuer and should not offer advice unless specifically requested—unless they think there is a safety issue.
- Instructors will draw a line on the patient's skin to indicate the source of a wound. If the instructor uses wax to make the wound more realistic, there will be a line beneath the wax.
- Cut only pants and shirts during a simulation. Do not cut a patient's underwear, bathing suit, or socks. Limit cutting where possible.
- All rescuers should wear gloves when treating a bleeding patient.
- Occasionally instructors will stop and "rewind" a scene.
- Do not remove splints until they have been checked by an instructor. If your splint needs work you may be asked to redo it before leaving class at the end of the day (or come in early the following day).
- Lead Rescuers must print their name clearly at the top of their SOAP Note and turn it in before the debrief.

Simulation Outlines

You should be a lead rescuer on each of the following simulations. Simulations in WFR & WEMT courses will be videoed and reviewed during the after-action debrief.

BLS Simulation Outline

- MOI is major trauma plus scene appropriate heat or cold challenge.
- All patients have an MOI for a spine injury.
- All patients have a minimum of one laceration.
- All patients need to be moved because of a scene glitch or initial assessment problem that requires immediate treatment.
- The scene ends when the lead rescuer has completed the first section in the SOAP Note or "Time" has been called.

Basic Simulation (No Treatment) Outline

- MOI is major trauma plus scene appropriate heat or cold challenge.
- All patients have a potential spine injury.
- All patients have a minimum of one laceration.
- All patients need to be moved because of a scene glitch or initial assessment problem that requires immediate treatment.
- All patients are alert within 5 minutes of the start time.
- All patients have a critical system problem and an unstable musculoskeletal injury.
- The scene ends when the lead rescuer has completed the entire SOAP Note or “Time” has been called by the instructor.

Advanced Simulation & Treatment Outline

- MOI is major trauma plus scene appropriate environmental mechanisms.
- All patients have a potential spine injury.
- All patients have a minimum of one laceration.
- Some patients need to be moved because of a scene glitch or initial assessment problem that requires immediate treatment.
- All patients are alert within 5 minutes of the start time.
- All patients will have a critical system problem, a stable musculoskeletal injury and an unstable musculoskeletal injury.
- The scene ends when the lead rescuer has completed the entire SOAP Note, ruled out the potential spine injury, and splinted the unstable musculoskeletal injury or “Time” has been called.

Evaluation & Testing

Evaluation during an in-person course is an ongoing process that begins when you walk in the door of your standard course or Part 2 practical session and ends when you leave. It encompasses all your statements and actions during the course. Instructors are trained to look for trends and to intervene when they spot ineffective ones. Your instructors will give you feedback when they have it; and, you should ask for more if you need it. You will be asked to turn in some homework assignments, most SOAP notes, and all quizzes and tests. Failure to complete and turn in assignments may result in not being awarded a certification, or being awarded a shorter or lower level certification. Most students feel overwhelmed in the early part of a course. This is normal. It takes time for the concepts to sink in. Talk with your instructor if you become unduly concerned about your progress. Instructors gather most of their objective information from homework, quizzes, SOAP notes, tests, and simulations. All Standard courses—except WFA courses—have a final in-class written exam; you must score 85% or greater to pass. Part 1 hybrid students passed their online exams prior to attending the Part 2 practical session; however, they should keep in mind that there will be homework and written quizzes throughout their practical session. Please remember, you must be present and engaged throughout the entire course in order to be eligible for certification.

WMTC & COVID-19

Introduction

We are still in the midst of the COVID pandemic and things remain fluid. Partisan politics continue to confuse what should ideally be a coordinated international and national health response. Further confusing the situation, public tolerance for masking and vaccination requirements has dropped significantly. As a result, individual health admission criteria and PPE requirements vary with the sponsor and the location of the course.

Discussion

Data clearly shows that COVID is transmitted by respiratory droplets and that fomite transmission—by touch—is possible, but very rare. Students are asked to wash their hands on a regular basis throughout the course and sanitize their hands before touching a patient's face during skill labs and simulations.

Omicron and its variants are highly contagious; it's likely that any successful new variants will be more so. While break-through cases in vaccinated people are becoming increasingly common, many infected persons are asymptomatic or have minor symptoms; very few cases result in hospitalization, and even fewer in death. PCR tests remain the gold standard for testing; however, they are not a reliable screening tool as many people who have had COVID and no longer shed the virus will test positive months after fully recovering. Rapid antibody tests are a better screening tool than molecular (PCR) tests because they tend to be positive when people have a high enough viral load to be contagious; that's also why they are reasonably reliable in detecting COVID in symptomatic infections. For effective screening, students should take a rapid antibody test an hour before class starts each morning. N-95, KN-95, and NF-95 respirators protect both the wearer and others.

All WMTC instructors are fully vaccinated and a copy of their vaccination card on file with the WMTC office.

At present, we recommend:

- All students and staff be fully vaccinated. This means two doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccines or one dose of the J&J vaccine and an approved booster (where available) with no medical or religious exemptions. If this condition is met, wearing masks or respirators inside a well-ventilated classroom during the course is optional.
- Rescuers wear a N-95, KN-95, or NF-95 during simulations. This will protect both the rescuer(s) and the patient.
- Teaching as much of the class outside as possible.
- All students and staff be vaccinated against the current strain of influenza during the fall, winter, and spring
- That if students wish to wear a mask or respirator for additional protection, they provide their own.
- Sponsors require students and staff to take an rapid antigen test each day before class starts; this adds an additional layer of protection against COVID transmission during class, as many people with COVID who are actively shedding the virus are asymptomatic or presymptomatic.

- Students who develop signs and symptoms of COVID must be removed from class and tested. They may return to class with a negative antigen test result and permission from a licensed health care provider (physician, PA, nurse).
- Those persons at high risk of severe disease should discuss the decision to attend a course with their physician before registering for the course.

So what does this mean?

The bottom line is that the Health Admission Criteria and PPE Requirements vary considerably from course to course. Look closely at the course admission criteria and PPE requirements during registration to ensure they align with your beliefs and personal risk tolerance. In courses with no or limited admission criteria, consider wearing an N-95, KN-95, or NF-95 respirator at all times to reduce the risk of transmitting the coronavirus.