College of Medical and Dental Sciences
University of Birmingham

College Guidance for Religious Observation
Amongst Jewish Students

Drafted by Dr June Jones in collaboration with staff and Jewish students from the College of Medical and Dental Sciences. September 2014.
Contents

1. Introduction.................................................................................................................. 3

2. Sabbath and Jewish Festivals.................................................................................... 4
   a. Sabbath................................................................................................................. 4
   b. Festivals............................................................................................................... 4
   c. Clinical placements.............................................................................................. 5
      i. Medical students
      ii. Nursing students
      iii. Physiotherapy students
   d. Examinations........................................................................................................ 5

3. Physical examinations of fellow students............................................................... 5

4. Scrubs.......................................................................................................................... 6

5. Kashrut....................................................................................................................... 6

6. Major festivals of the Jewish calendar 2014/15....................................................... 7

7. Contact information.................................................................................................. 8

8. appendix 1: Guidance to students and tutors on physical examination... 9
1. **Introduction**

The main aim of this document is to advise Jewish students how they can study in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences without compromising their faith. As well as this it will serve as a guide to highlight and help staff and students understand what is expected of Jewish students whilst they study for professional careers.

This document has been produced in response to issues raised by various groups at Birmingham Medical School on matters of Jewish religious observance within the MBChB course. This document was originally compiled by a group of Jewish medical students (representing the five years) studying at the College of Medical and Dental Sciences. The original guidance document was written by a group of Jewish medical students who represent a variety of perspectives within Judaism. Since the University restructuring, medical, dental, nursing and physiotherapy courses have come under the remit of the College. It was therefore deemed timely to have guidance that would help all students on clinically orientated courses to fulfil their religious observances appropriately.

The document has two main purposes:
- To raise awareness amongst the student body, academic and non-academic members of staff, and the various Hospital Trusts affiliated with the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, of some of the day to day situations Jewish students experience studying clinically based courses.
- To provide students with experiential advice on how to deal with areas of potential difficulty.

In an attempt to ensure that this guidance complies with all existing University and College of Medical and Dental Sciences guidelines, extensive consultation with senior College of Medical and Dental Sciences staff along with the Birmingham University Chaplaincy (in particular Rabbi Cohen), has occurred.

These guidelines have been approved by the following groups:
- College Learning and Teaching Committee
- MBChB Student Welfare and Disciplinary Advisory Group (SWADAG)
- the Curriculum Development and Implementation Groups of the respective College clinically orientated courses (MBChB, BDS, BNurs, BSc Physiotherapy, Postgraduate Diploma Physician Assistant Studies)
- Taught Postgraduate Programme Committee and Graduate Studies Committee.

A review of this document will occur annually in July/August by Dr June Jones, College Lead on Religious and Cultural Diversity in collaboration with student representatives.

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Judaism is the oldest of the three Abrahamic religions and has about 13 million followers today. It is a very communal religion, based around interpretation of the principles and ethics found in the Hebrew Bible expanded in the rabbinical discussions known as the Talmud. Jewish men often wear a head covering called a ‘kipa’ or ‘yarmulkeh’ to remind them of G-d. In addition, married Jewish women may cover their hair. The main hallmarks of Jewish observance focus on the Sabbath, various festivals throughout the year and the Jewish dietary laws known as ‘Kashrut’. This document is designed to give background behind the requests that a Jewish student may make for religious observance. There are many different strands and types of Jews but this document will try to cover the concerns of the most Orthodox, assuming that the concerns of those who are less observant will be covered within this.

2. Sabbath and Jewish Festivals

The Bible recounts how God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, Shabbat. In commemoration of this, Jews refrain from active work every Saturday and do not do things that demonstrate Man’s control over nature. A wide range of practices are forbidden, from carrying in public to using electricity, riding in a car, using public transport or writing. Jewish days begin at sunset and end at sundown the next day, rather than at midnight, so the Shabbat actually begins at sunset on Friday afternoon and finishes at sundown on Saturday evening. This is of most difficulty in the winter when it gets dark early; the earliest time is approximately 3:30pm.

a) Sabbath
It is possible for students to leave during lunch time on Fridays, get ready for Shabbat and then return to listen to lectures (even when Shabbat has come in). Students would not be able to take notes or to carry handouts home with them afterwards. Students could arrange with a non-Jewish friend to have a copy of their notes and handouts after Shabbat. Anyone wishing to observe the Sabbath in this way will need to apply for authorised absence/Prior Leave of Absence. The College of Medical and Dental Sciences expects that it is the responsibility of individual students to catch up on any learning they miss. It is important to stress however that Jewish students are still able to act to save patients in life threatening circumstances on the Sabbath. The act of saving a life overrides almost every other law in Judaism, based on the precept that ‘he who saves a life is considered as if he saved an entire world.’

b) Festivals
There are a number of festivals throughout the year with similar restrictions to the Shabbat. For example, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Rosh Hashanah and notably Passover. Passover is important because it traditionally falls within the exam period for medical clinical exams each year. There have been legitimate requests for exams to be moved to accommodate such religious festivals in previous years where a clash occurred. A list of festival dates for the next few years has been included at the end of this document for convenience. It is hoped that such clashes will now be avoided in future Any Jewish student who wishes to take these festival dates off to spend time with family will again be expected to apply for authorised absence/Prior Leave of Absence, using the appropriate forms. Please see course handbooks for further details. Authorised absence/Prior leave of Absence should be requested at least a month in advance to the planned absence if possible.
c) Clinical placements
During the clinical years/clinical placements most of the time is spent in various hospitals and community settings in the West Midlands or academic in-days study periods in the medical school or Division of Nursing and Physiotherapy. See above for advice about taking authorised absence for Sabbath and festivals. On-call rotations/off duty can be scheduled for Saturdays or Fridays and can be difficult as they finish late in the evening. It is incumbent on the student to swap with a colleague and inform their undergraduate coordinator or relevant Practice Placement Manager.

i) Medical Students
Where clinical placements are on Fridays during winter months, it will be necessary to complete the ‘Request for Special Placement’ form for clinical placements near a synagogue. Wherever possible this will be accommodated. For the MBChB, this is to be submitted to the Student Support and Development Office (Medical School reception) for placements starting in September each year. A general email will be sent to all medical students detailing the need for this form to be completed for all special requests in January of each academic year. Please check the form for submission dates. Students should detail where they live so a reasonably close practice can be identified.

ii) Nursing Students
Where clinical placements (9-5 hours) are on a Friday during winter months, nursing students are advised to speak with the Programme Director or the Practice Placement Manager for an alternative shift to be arranged.

iii) Physiotherapy students
When clinical placements are on a Friday afternoon, BSc physiotherapy are to submit a request to leave early to the welfare tutor Carol Rowe who will liaise with the practice placement team.

d) Examinations
With regards to examination dates, the University makes every effort to prevent examinations coinciding with religious festivals. Nevertheless, due to time constraints, this may not always be possible. If an exam is timetabled on the date of a religious festival, please contact Dr June Jones, who will speak with the appropriate course staff/Exams Officer to discuss whether changes can be made. Students should note that any authorized absence/Prior Leave of Absence becomes void should it fall on the day of an examination. Please note, students are prohibited from taking any material into the examination venue which is not authorised for completion of the examination paper. This includes religious texts and prayer cards.
3. Physical Examinations on fellow students

There is a principal in Judaism that physical contact between non-married or unrelated people of the opposite sex is to be avoided (“shomer negiah”). There are specific allowances for contact between medical professionals and students in a clinical setting that do not apply in social settings. A small number of medical students will be particular about this law. It is preferable to practice on a partner of the same sex, however if one is not available a partner of the opposite sex is acceptable. Although this is a broad allowance, individuals may wish to approach their Rabbis with specific questions and scenarios. If a student does request a same-sex colleague to practice with, it is not intended to cause offence to the colleague of the opposite sex. On the Physiotherapy BSC, where physical examination on fellow students is a compulsory part of the course, every effort will be made to facilitate same-sex examinations of peers if requested. (Please see appendix 1 for further general guidance on physical examination of fellow students on MBChB.)

4. Scrubs
For reasons of modesty, girls may wish to wear a clean T-shirt underneath their scrubs, much as female Muslim students do. They must inform the theatre nurse or other member of staff before doing so. Students must be prepared to follow Trust policy on dress code and abide by the Student Code of Conduct.

5. Kashrut (Jewish dietary law)
A large component of Judaism relates to kosher or acceptable food. Meat must be supervised when ritually slaughtered and meat may not be mixed with milk. Insects are specifically prohibited so vegetables must be carefully inspected. This makes eating out with M groups or clinical teams difficult, as observant Jews are unable to eat in meat or vegetarian restaurants. Students should suggest suitable alternatives for group socials, such as bowling, rather than not go to socials.
6. Jewish Festival dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>2013 - 2014 (5774)</th>
<th>2014 - 2015 (5775)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosh HaShanah</td>
<td>September 5, 2013</td>
<td>September 25, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
<td>September 14, 2013</td>
<td>October 4, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkot</td>
<td>September 19, 2013</td>
<td>October 9, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shemini Atzeret</td>
<td>September 26, 2013</td>
<td>October 16, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simkhat Torah</td>
<td>September 27, 2013</td>
<td>October 17, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chanukah</td>
<td>November 28, 2013</td>
<td>December 17, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tu B'Shevat</td>
<td>January 16, 2014</td>
<td>February 4, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purim</td>
<td>March 16, 2014</td>
<td>March 5, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>April 15, 2014</td>
<td>April 4, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Ha-Atzmaut</td>
<td>May 6, 2014</td>
<td>April 23, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesach Sheni</td>
<td>May 13, 2014</td>
<td>May 3, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lag B'Omer</td>
<td>May 18, 2014</td>
<td>May 7, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shavu'ot</td>
<td>June 4, 2014</td>
<td>May 24, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tisha B'Av</td>
<td>August 5, 2014</td>
<td>July 26, 2015</td>
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7. Contact Information

College Lead on Religious and Cultural Diversity:
  * Dr June Jones – J.Jones.1@bham.ac.uk; 414 2532

Jewish Society Medical School Representatives:
  * http://www.jewishmedics.com

Birmingham University Jewish Society
  * http://www.bhamjsoc.com

Jewish University Chaplain:
  * Rabbi Fishel Cohen - fishelcohen@gmail.com; 07771 653717

*The Board of Deputies of British Jews maintains a calendar of the Jewish festivals 10 years into the future. They also have documents and advice for employers and observant Jews in the workplace.*

The Board of Deputies of British Jews
6 Bloomsbury Square, London
WC1A 2LP
Tel: +44 (0)20 7543 5400
Fax: +44 (0)20 7543 0010
Email: info@bod.org.uk

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has devolved medical queries to the Jewish Medical Association UK (JMedUK), the Jewish medical group for health care professionals and students.

**MBChB specific:**
Tutoring Office:
  * Claudia Gray - c.m.gray@bham.ac.uk

Community Based Medicine:
  * Dr. Helen Stokes-Lampard – H.J.StokesLampard@bham.ac.uk

Hospital Undergraduate Coordinator:
  * Please refer to: http://www.medicine.bham.ac.uk/schooloffice/internal/mbchb/yr5-0506/Comm/index.htm

**Nursing specific:**
Helen Gardner - Programme Director -4144562- h.e.gardner@bham.ac.uk
Eloise Nolan - Welfare Tutor (Nursing) -4146659- e.nolan@bham.ac.uk
Sarah Perrott - clinical placement contact -4148383- s.perrott@bham.ac.uk

**Physiotherapy specific:**
Dr Jill Ramsey – Programme Director - 0121 415 8607 ramsjrez@adf.bham.ac.uk
Carol Rowe - welfare tutor – 0121 415 8595 - rowec@adf.bham.ac.uk

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GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS AND TUTORS ON PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Introduction

Learning clinical medicine is about more than just having a sound theoretical knowledge base. Medical students must also learn how to perform physical examination techniques in order to adequately assess patients to diagnose and to treat. It can initially be quite daunting to examine strangers, especially when students are newly acquiring their skills. It may also be daunting for the patients, if the students are not adequately prepared.

One method of gaining confidence and becoming more proficient is for students to practise their clinical examination skills on each other. On some courses (for example, most physiotherapy degrees and some medical degrees), students are required to examine each other and must be prepared to expose themselves as necessary, including in a mixed gender setting. This requirement may deter some students from applying for these courses.

At Birmingham Medical School, we would not want to reduce the diversity of our student population by having stringent requirements which do not try to accommodate an individual’s beliefs and degree of comfort with being examined or examining others. Nevertheless, physical examination is necessary and students do need to be able to approach the examination of a patient without fear. If some students are willing to be examined and others are not, this could be deemed to be unfair as those being examined will have less opportunity to practise.

The strategy behind this guidance stems from the belief that students will be better able and more confident in examining a patient if they have first had opportunities to examine someone who isn’t a patient. This may be in a general practice setting, for example, learning to perform an abdominal examination on each other before examining a patient. This may also occur in practical sessions on surface anatomy at the Medical School. Students do gain an understanding of some of the discomfort a patient may feel about having to remove clothing for examination. They also learn firsthand the importance of patient comfort in terms of the examiner having warm hands and palpating gently initially, for example.

What students should expect

1. Students should expect to be asked to take part in physical examination – either as the examiner or person being examined.

2. Students have the right to air any concerns they might have about being examined or examining other students (and to have their concerns accommodated where possible.)

3. For certain core examination skills, for example, blood pressure measurement in CBM in years 1 and 2, it is reasonable to expect all students to practise this skill on each other. This would involve exposing the arm above the elbow in order to palpate the brachial artery. If a student would prefer not to do this in a mixed gender environment they should make this known to their tutor. A separate room or private area of a room should be made available for students to practise in a single gender setting. However, this skill may need to be supervised and the tutor supervising may be of a different gender to the students.

4. When examining body systems which require exposure of the chest or abdomen, the student’s modesty should be respected. As already described in section 3, some students might request a single gender environment and this request should be accommodated.

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where possible, this skill may need to be supervised and the tutor supervising may be of a
different gender to the students.

5. Students will not be asked to perform intimate physical examinations on each other or to
remove undergarments.

6. No student should feel pressurised into being examined. This also involves the cooperation
of the rest of the group and students giving fair and equal consideration to one another and
respecting each other’s beliefs and values.

7. Sometimes during a routine examination, an incidental unusual or potentially abnormal
finding may be discovered. For example, a blood pressure reading may be higher than
expected. In some anatomy practical sessions you may have the opportunity to use an
Ultrasound machine to identify blood vessels. Again, potentially an incidental abnormality
may be discovered. In these instances, our advice would be for you to seek independent
medical advice from your own GP.

In CBM, here are times when you may be examining each other.

Semester 1

Day 1 – palpate radial pulse and do BP on each other.
Day 3 – introduction to palpation
Day 4 – may practise percussion on each other (chest). It is acceptable for female students to wear a
vest top for this examination.

Semester 2

Day 5 – GP tutor demonstrates abdominal examination – ideally patient recruited for this, and then
the students should be able to examine a patient themselves with supervision
Day 6 – respiratory examination, again usually a patient will have been recruited for this
Day 7 – examine joint – usually knee, usually a patient

Semester 3

Day 9- CV examination – on patient usually includes foot pulses
Day 10 – abdominal examination – on patient
Day 11 – venepuncture (may be on patient or each other)
Day 12 – CV examination – on patient

Semester 4

Day 13 - neuro exam on patient
Day 14, 15 & 16 – practise examinations learned so far (respiratory, abdominal, CV) may be on
patients but might be on each other

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In anatomy, here are the times you may be examining each other

The first session we do is on the last day of term semester 1 (NAS) – drawing on the distribution of nerves in upper and lower limbs and face – and marking where they might be vulnerable to injury. Students will be asked to palpate major bony prominences, but not in the groin.

Semester 2

During MJM there are a few sessions where students are asked to palpate themselves (as a minimum) and if they are willing, others too – for shoulder, elbow, wrist, hand, then triangles of the neck, skull (gently) and the knee and ankle.

In the last week of semester 2 in MJM there is a very basic neurological assessment – this time asking for muscles to be moved, assessing reflexes etc – so we ask for shorts and t-shirts here.

Also in the second semester, we ask for a ‘model’ to show surface anatomy of the abdomen, and the demonstrator will do a basic abdominal palpation as a demonstration on that ‘model’ - usually a male Student. If no one volunteers – it is not done.

Semester 3 – Weeks 1 and 4 – we ask for 2 models each time for surface anatomy of the heart and palpation and stethoscopes for auscultation – usually there will be 4 or 5 working in table groups doing this. Also peripheral vessels – students palpate their own femoral pulse.

Nothing in semester 4

November 2012, updated August 2014

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