



Cornell University
College of Veterinary Medicine

PREGNANCY GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

The potential for human injury always exists in the practice of veterinary medicine, and it increases whenever an involved person is pregnant. Undoubtedly the greatest hazards are accidents which can occur while working with animal patients, and which might cause physical trauma to the pregnant woman or to her unborn child. Added hazards exist through exposure to toxic drugs, infectious agents, inhalation anesthetics, or radiation.

Any pregnant student should:

Contact a physician immediately to get recommendations 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 the pregnancy.

Inform administrators in clinical veterinary medicine of her pregnancy as early as possible in order that steps may be taken to conform to the plan developed by the physician.

Available options

1. The student may take a leave of absence. It is strongly recommended that the pregnant student consider withdrawing for a year and plan to be readmitted to graduate with the next class, particularly if the student is in her third or fourth year of study. This option minimizes risks and reduces the concerns of everyone.
2. She may continue as a regular student with some schedule and assignment changes. This option may not delay or only slightly delay the time of graduation. This option may not be without risks. Continuing with schedule changes depends on:
 - changes that can be made in an individual's schedule of clinical assignments which are prepared in advance for an entire calendar year
 - the willingness of classmates to exchange scheduled assignments with the pregnant student
 - certification by an attending physician of any constraints and of the individual's physical ability to continue full participation in aspects of the educational program

Rights and Responsibilities

It is recognized that the pregnant woman has rights and the responsibility for decisions concerning her pregnancy based on medical opinion regarding safety and childbearing. She should expect due consideration from everyone associated with her during her pregnancy, whatever her decisions may be. At the same time she is expected to complete each and every requirement of the veterinary curriculum by a schedule or plan that can be implemented and by which the risks are deemed assumable by her and her physician. A faculty member may refuse to allow a pregnant student to participate in assignments or activities whenever that faculty member or most clinicians consider that the potential for accidents or for exposure to hazards is high. (Adopted by the Faculty of the Department of Medicine and Surgery, Fall, 1982)