



BIOSAFETY ALERT!

UBC & THE GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

The World Health Organization (WHO) strategy to eliminate poliovirus has hit milestone with the declaration that wildtype poliovirus type 2 is done!

What is Polio?

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that attacks the nervous system, and in some cases, leads to irreversible paralysis. Polio has no cure, and until the introduction of effective vaccination programs in the 1950s, it was a serious public health problem in Canada that left many children paralyzed.

What is the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)?

In 1988, the WHO partnered with Rotary International, the US CDC, UNICEF and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to immunize billions of children against poliovirus. In September 2015, indigenous wildtype poliovirus type 2 was declared eradicated. The remaining types 1 & 3 are nearing indigenous eradication. The next phase of the GPEI is to guard against the resurrection of the virus through accidental release from research facilities.

What is Canada's role?

Canada has committed to support the GPEI through establishing and maintaining a national inventory of facilities that handle or store poliovirus or poliovirus potentially infectious material. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has been designated the lead Canadian agency for the GPEI support project.

What is Poliovirus Potentially Infectious Material (PV PIM)?

Human stool specimens, respiratory samples, or environmental sewage samples, and their derivatives, that are stored in conditions that support poliovirus survival, and were collected at a time and place where poliovirus was in circulation, or when oral polio vaccine was in use. In many cases, these samples were collected without any thought to possible contamination with poliovirus.

How is this relevant to UBC?

All research institutions across Canada are required to assess their biological specimen inventories for PV PIM and report their findings to PHAC through their Biosafety Office.

How can I help?

Take some time to assess your biological specimen inventory for PV PIM and then complete the [UBC Polio Survey](#). More guidance on assessment, including times & places of last polio cases, is available [here](#).