

From the Chief Medical Officer  
**Dr Michael McBride**



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydënter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9076 5615  
Fax: 028 90523206  
E-mail: [sgu-  
niceguidance@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:sgu-niceguidance@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

**Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 11/09 TA142**

Chief Executives of HSS Boards – **for distribution to:**

Directors of Public Health  
Directors of Nursing  
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services  
Directors of Primary Care – for cascade to prescribing and GP  
Advisors

Chief Executives of HSC Trusts – **for distribution to:**

Medical Directors – for cascade to relevant staff  
Directors of Nursing – for cascade to relevant staff  
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services – for cascade to relevant  
staff

Date: 5 February 2009

General Practitioners

HSC Clinical and Social Governance Leads

Chief Executives of HSC Special Agencies and NDPBs

**For Information**

Chairs of HSS Boards  
Chairs of HSC Trusts  
Chief Executive, Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority  
Chief Officers HSC Councils  
Chief Executive/Postgraduate Dean, NIMDTA  
Chief Executive, NIPPET  
Chief Executive, NIPEC  
Chief Executive, RMSC

Dear Colleagues

**Technology Appraisal No 142- Erythropoietin (alpha and beta) and darbepoetin for the treatment of cancer-treatment induced anaemia**

Erythropoietin analogues with iron injections are recommended as a possible treatment for anaemia caused by cancer treatment only in:

- women receiving platinum-based chemotherapy for cancer of the ovaries who have a blood haemoglobin level of 8 g/100 ml or lower
- people who have very severe anaemia and cannot receive blood transfusions.

In the circumstances outlined above the erythropoietin analogue with the lowest acquisition cost should be used.

Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing erythropoietin analogues for people in the categories above who were already taking them when the guidance was issued. These people should be able to carry on taking erythropoietin analogues until they and their healthcare professionals decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

DHSSPS advises that this guidance is valid for Northern Ireland and endorses it for implementation in HSC. It should be noted that since NICE published the guidance, there has been a European Medicines Agency press release warning of potential safety implications. This can be read at

<http://www.emea.europa.eu/pdfs/human/press/pr/33396308en.pdf>

Please also note guidance from MHRA/CHM at:

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Safetywarningsalertsandrecalls/Safetywarningsandmessagesformedicines/Monthlylistsofinformationforhealthcareprofessionalsonthesafetyofmedicines/CON023075>

In addition the BNF reference has been updated. All of this should be borne in mind when determining the best clinical treatment for an individual patient.

The full NICE clinical guideline is available for download at:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA142>

The HSC sector also should note that;

1. The Department expects HSC organisations to put plans in place within 3 months of the date of issue of this E Mail alert to facilitate the implementation of this guidance.
2. This guidance will be reviewed by NICE as and when required.
3. This advice does not override or replace the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions in the circumstances of their individual patients, in consultation with the patient and/or guardian or carer. This would, for example, include situations where individual patients have other conditions or complications that need to be taken into account in determining whether the NICE guidance is fully appropriate in their case.
4. NICE has developed tools to help organisations implement this guidance. These are available at <http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA142> and include costing tools, implementation advice and audit criteria to monitor local practice.

All NICE guidance endorsed by the Department to date can be accessed on the DHSSPS website at:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/sqsd-guidance-nice-guidance>

Circular HSS (PPMD) (NICE) 01/006 issued on 30 June 2006 provides further information on the Northern Ireland process for reviewing NICE guidance and further details on the local status of the Institute's guidance. This circular can be accessed at:

[http://dhsspsni.gov.uk/nice\\_guidance\\_01-06.pdf](http://dhsspsni.gov.uk/nice_guidance_01-06.pdf)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael McBride', written in a cursive style.

**DR MICHAEL MCBRIDE**  
**Chief Medical Officer**