

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

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agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 12/09 TA 143

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 No143 - Adalimumab , etanercept and infliximab for ankylosing
spondylitis**

Adalimumab or etanercept are recommended as possible treatments for people with severe
ankylosing spondylitis who:

- have active spinal disease as assessed on two separate occasions 12 weeks apart,
and

- have tried at least two non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) but they have not worked.

Healthcare professionals should take into account any disabilities or difficulties in communicating that might mean that the standard assessments do not provide accurate information about a person's spinal disease.

Treatment should be started and supervised by a specialist who is experienced in diagnosing and treating ankylosing spondylitis. People taking adalimumab or etanercept should have regular check-ups. Treatment should continue only if the person's ankylosing spondylitis shows an adequate improvement. If the improvement is not maintained or if the drug stops working then treatment should be stopped.

If a person has to stop taking adalimumab or etanercept during the first 12 weeks of treatment because it has unwanted side effects, their specialist may offer them the other drug as an alternative. However, if treatment with adalimumab or etanercept does not work or stops working, the other drug should not be offered.

Infliximab is not recommended for people with ankylosing spondylitis. Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing infliximab for people who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These patients should be able to carry on taking infliximab until they and their healthcare professional 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.

The full NICE clinical guideline is available for download at:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA143>

The HSC sector also should note that;

1. The Department expects HSC organisations to put plans in place within 3 months of this e-mail alert, to facilitate implementation of this guidance.
2. This guidance will be reviewed by NICE in October 2010.
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/TA143> and include costing tools, implementation advice and audit criteria to monitor local practice.
5. Nice has developed related guidance as follows:
 - Adalimumab for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis (TA125)

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA125>

- Adalimumab, etanercept and infliximab for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (TA130)
<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA130>
- Etanercept and infliximab for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis (TA104)
<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA104>
- Etanercept and efalizumab for the treatment of adults with psoriasis (TA103)
<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA103>

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



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