

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**

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**Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 16/09 TA 159**

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: 2 March 2009

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, NICPPET  
Chief Executive, NIPEC  
Chief Executive, RMSC

**Dear Colleagues**

**Technology Appraisal No 159 - Spinal Cord Stimulation for Chronic Pain of  
Neuropathic or Ischaemic Origin**

Spinal cord stimulation is recommended as a possible treatment for adults with chronic pain of neuropathic origin if they:

- continue to experience chronic pain (measuring at least 50 mm on a 0–100 mm visual analogue scale) for at least 6 months despite standard treatments, and
- have had a successful trial of spinal cord stimulation as part of an assessment by a specialist team

Treatment with spinal cord stimulation should only be given after the person has been assessed by a specialist team experienced in assessing and managing people receiving treatment with spinal cord stimulation.

Spinal cord stimulation is not recommended as a treatment option for adults with chronic pain of ischaemic origin except in the context of research as part of a clinical trial. People who are currently using spinal cord stimulation for the treatment of chronic pain of ischaemic origin should have the option to continue treatment until they and their clinicians consider it appropriate to stop.

DHSSPS advises that this guidance is valid for Northern Ireland and endorses it for implementation in HSC.

The full NICE technology appraisal is available for download at:  
<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA159>

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 considered for review by NICE in November 2011.
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/TA159> and include costing tools, implementation advice and audit criteria to monitor local practice.
5. NICE is currently developing a related clinical guideline on Low Back Pain: The Acute Management of Patients with Chronic (longer than 6 weeks) Non-specific Low Back Pain, expected to be published in May 2009. The draft guideline can be accessed at [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

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

[Safety, Quality and Standards | NICE Guidance | DHSSPS\(NI\)](#)

Circular HSS (PPMD) (NICE) 01/06 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)



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