

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 34/08 CG 57

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydënter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Chief Executives of HSS Boards – **for distribution to:**
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Directors of Nursing
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services
Directors of Primary Care – for cascade to prescribing and GP
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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: 3 July 2008

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

NICE Clinical Guideline No 57 – Atopic Eczema in Children

Atopic eczema is a chronic inflammatory itchy skin condition that develops in early childhood in the majority of cases. It is typically an episodic disease of exacerbation (flares, which may occur as frequently as two or three per month) and remissions. In some cases it may be continuous. Atopic eczema often has a genetic component that leads to the breakdown of the skin barrier. This makes the skin susceptible to trigger factors, including irritants and allergens, which can make the eczema worse.

Many cases of atopic eczema clear or improve during childhood, whereas others persist into adulthood. Some children who have atopic eczema will go on to develop asthma and/or allergic rhinitis; this sequence of events is sometimes referred to as the 'atopic march'. Although atopic eczema is not always recognised by healthcare professionals as being a serious medical condition, it can have a significant negative impact on quality of life for children and their parents and carers.

This clinical guideline concerns the management of atopic eczema in children from birth up to the age of 12 years. It has been developed with the aim of providing guidance on:

- Diagnosis and assessment of the impact of the condition.
- Management during and between flares.
- Information and education for children and their parents or carers about the condition.

DHSSPS advises that this guidance is valid for Northern Ireland and endorses it as good practice guidance for the HSC sector.

The full clinical guideline is available for download at:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11901>

The HSC sector also should note that;

1. The Department expects the HSC sector to take account of this guidance in their delivery of services to patients with eczema.
2. 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.
3. NICE has developed tools to help organisations implement this guidance. These are available at <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11901> and include costing tools, implementation advice and audit criteria to monitor local practice;
4. This guidance will be updated by NICE as required.

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://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/nice_guidance_01-06.pdf



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