

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Circular HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 44/09 TA 168

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

**Subject: Technology Appraisal No 168 –
Amantadine, Oseltamivir and Zanamivir for the
Treatment of Influenza (review of CG 58)**

Circular Reference: HSC (SQSD) (NICE) 44/2009

For action by:

Chief Executive of HSC Board – **for distribution to:**
Director of Performance Management & Service Improvement
Director of Commissioning
Assistant Directors of Commissioning
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management
Family Practitioner Services Leads - for cascade to all
General Practitioners

Chief Executive of Public Health Agency – **for distribution to:**
Director of Public Health
Director of Nursing

Chief Executives of HSC Trusts – **for distribution to:**
Medical Directors – for cascade to relevant staff
Directors of Nursing – for cascade to relevant staff
Heads of Pharmaceutical Services – for cascade to relevant
staff
Directors of Acute Services – for cascade to relevant staff
HSC Clinical and Social Governance Leads

Chief Executives of HSC Special Agencies and NDPBs

For Information to:

Chair of HSC Board
Chair of Public Health Agency
Chairs of HSC Trusts
Chief Executive, Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority
Chief Executive Patient and Client Council
Chief Executive/Postgraduate Dean, NIMDTA
Chief Executive, NICPLD
Chief Executive, NIPEC
Chair, RMSG

Summary of Contents:

NICE has said that its recommendations about oseltamivir and zanamivir should not reduce efforts to give vaccination (also called the flu jab) to people for whom it is recommended in national guidelines.

The guidance does not cover widespread epidemics.

Oseltamivir and zanamivir are recommended as possible treatments for people with flu if all of the following apply:

- the person is in an 'at-risk' group
- the person has a 'flu-like illness' (see page 3) and can start treatment within 48 hours (36 hours for zanamivir treatment in children) of the first sign of symptoms.
- the flu virus is known to be going around and it is likely that a flulike illness has been caused by the flu virus.

Amantadine is not recommended to treat people with flu.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the content of this Circular should be addressed to:

Date of Issue: 22 September 2009

Related documents:

See Bullet Point 5 below

Superseded documents

This guidance replaces TA58 flu treatment – zanamivir (review), amantadine, oseltamivir.

Status of Contents:

Action

Implementation:

Put plans in place within 3 months

Standards & Guidelines Unit
DHSSPS
Room D1.4
Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

SGU-NICEGuidance@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Additional copies:

Available to download from

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/sqs/sqsd-guidance.htm>

Dear Colleagues

Technology Appraisal No 168 – Amantadine, Oseltamivir and Zanamivir for the Treatment of Influenza (review of CG 58)

NICE has said that its recommendations about oseltamivir and zanamivir should not reduce efforts to give vaccination (also called the flu jab) to people for whom it is recommended in national guidelines.

The guidance does not cover widespread epidemics.

Oseltamivir and zanamivir are recommended as possible treatments for people with flu if all of the following apply:

- the person is in an 'at-risk' group
- the person has a 'flu-like illness' (see page 3) and can start treatment within 48 hours (36 hours for zanamivir treatment in children) of the first sign of symptoms.
- the flu virus is known to be going around and it is likely that a flulike illness has been caused by the flu virus.

Healthcare professionals should discuss the choice of oseltamivir or zanamivir with the person being offered the drugs. The decision should take into account which drug the person would prefer and any possible unwanted effects. If all else is equal, the cheapest drug should be used.

If there is an outbreak of 'flu-like illness' in a long-term residential or nursing home, oseltamivir and zanamivir may be offered to treat residents in 'at-risk' groups who have symptoms of flu. This could happen even if the flu virus is not around in the wider community outside the home, but the healthcare team should be sure that the illness is flu.

Amantadine is not recommended to treat people with flu

This guidance replaces TA58 flu treatment – zanamivir (review), amantadine, oseltamivir.

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/TA168>

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 by review 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/TA168> and include a costing statement and audit criteria to monitor local practice.
5. NICE has developed related guidance and this can be accessed at:
 - Respiratory tract infections – antibiotic prescribing. Prescribing of antibiotics for self-limiting respiratory tract infections in adults and children in primary care. NICE clinical guideline CG69 (2008). Available for download at www.nice.org.uk/CG69
 - Oseltamivir, amantadine (review) and zanamivir for the prophylaxis of influenza. NICE technology appraisal guidance TA158 (2008). Available for download at : www.nice.org.uk/TA158

All NICE guidance endorsed by the Department to date can be accessed on the DHSSPS website at: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/sqs/sqsd-guidance/sqsd-guidance-nice-guidance.htm>

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



DR MICHAEL McBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer