

HSS(MD) 5-00

27 March 2000

To: Directors of Public Health
Chief Executives of Boards
Chief Executives of Trusts
Chief Executive of the NI Ambulance Trust
Medical Directors of Acute Trusts
Consultants in A & E Departments
Consultant General Surgeons
Consultant Neurosurgeons
Consultant Radiologists

Dear Colleague

MANAGEMENT OF PATIENTS WITH ACUTE HEAD INJURY

During the last year, there has been concern in the Province about the management of patients with acute head injury. During 1999 the Royal College of Surgeons in England published a report of a Working Party on the Management of Patients with Head Injuries. As a result, I think that it is timely to ask Acute Units in the Province to examine how they admit and manage patients with head injury and whether their procedures are adequate to deal with this difficult group of patients. A small working party in the Province has drawn up a set of guidelines for the management of patients with acute head injury with an accompanying flow chart and these are attached. These guidelines have been discussed by the Directors of Public Health and also by the Special Advisory Committees to the CMO in Neurosciences, General Surgery and Anaesthetics.

All acute hospitals should ensure that a head injury management policy is developed. It is important that hospitals which admit and observe head injured patients have CT scanning facilities available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Hospitals should give careful consideration to which specialists in their hospital will observe and look after head injured patients who are admitted. It is particularly important that staff who look after patients with head injury are properly trained in the observation of patients using the Glasgow Coma Scale and know the importance of changes in the patient's condition. Chief Executives should ensure that this information is brought to the attention of all clinical staff.

Yours sincerely

DR HENRIETTA CAMPBELL CB
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER