

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Chief Executives of HSS Boards
Chief Executives of HSC Trusts
Medical Directors in HSC Trusts for cascade to:
 Consultant Obstetricians
 Consultant GUM Physicians
 Consultant Infectious Disease Paediatricians
 Consultant Virologists & Microbiologists
Directors of Nursing HSS Boards
Directors of Nursing HSC Trusts for cascade to:
 All Midwives
Directors of Public Health HSS Boards
Director of NI Blood Transfusion Service
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 90 520658
Fax: 028 90 520574
Email: michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)13/2008
Date: 7 April 2008

Dear Colleague

SCREENING FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN PREGNANCY: STANDARDS TO SUPPORT THE UK ANTENATAL SCREENING PROGRAMME

Summary

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Regional Audit of Antenatal Infections Screening Programme: Report and Recommendations is now available at www.gain-ni.org. The Report contains a number of recommendations for the programme, laboratories (including NIBTS) and Boards and Trusts.

Background

Guidance on the Antenatal Infection Screening Programme for HIV, hepatitis B, syphilis and rubella antibody have previously been covered in circulars HSS(MD)17/98, HSS(MD)24/01, HSS(MD)11/02 and HSS(MD)26/02. In 2002 the DHSS produced interim standards for Antenatal Infections Screening Programme and in August 2003 the Department of Health (London) published *Screening for Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy: Standards to Support the UK Antenatal Screening Programme*.

Regional Audit

In 2005 the Regional Multi-Professional Audit Group (RMAG) funded an audit into the Antenatal Infection Screening Programme. The purpose of the audit was to assess how well the Northern Ireland screening programme met the national standards for antenatal infection screening. The aim of the screening programme is to prevent perinatal infection with hepatitis B and fetal

syphilis, reduce to a minimum HIV vertical transmission and ensure rubella non immune women are being offered post-natal MMR vaccine where appropriate. The audit included all maternity units and laboratories providing testing services for the antenatal infection screening programme.

The *Audit of Antenatal Infections Screening Programme: Report and Recommendations* is available at www.gain-ni.org. A multidisciplinary group chaired by Consultant Virologist, Dr Peter Coyle, Belfast Trust, undertook the direction of the audit. The audit report contains a number of recommendations. The attention of Boards and Trusts are drawn to these.

Action

Trusts and Boards should consider the recommendations in the Audit Report in relation to the infection screening programme provided or commissioned by them. All antenatal infection screening practice should meet *Screening for Infectious Diseases in Pregnancy: Standards to Support the UK Antenatal Screening Programme 2003*. They can be accessed at www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/20/49/04092049.pdf. Trust Chief Executives should ensure that these standards are met within their Trusts.

Your attention is also drawn to the NICE antenatal and postnatal care guidelines (available at www.nice.org.uk/guidelines). In particular:

- The importance of booking women by 14 weeks of pregnancy. Early identification of maternal syphilis infection is essential to ensure timely treatment and thus reduce the risk of an adverse outcome to the pregnancy or infection of the baby.
- Women who are rubella non immune should be offered MMR vaccination prior to discharge from hospital after delivery or within the first week post delivery if delivered at home. This is also advised by the 'Green Book' Immunisation against Infectious Disease 2006.

For further information please contact; Dr Margaret Boyle, margaret.boyle2@dhsspsni.gov.uk or Jackie McGeagh, jackie.mcgeagh@dhsspsni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



DR MICHAEL McBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer

cc: Members of the Regional Antenatal Infection Screening Group
Dr Maura Briscoe, Director of Safety, Quality & Standards Directorate, DHSSPS
Ms Nicola Porter, Guidelines & Audit Manager, DHSSPS
Professor Patrick Johnston, Dean & Head of School, Medicine & Dentistry, QUB
Dr Terry McMurray, Chief Executive, NIMDTA
Professor Jean Orr CBE, Head of School, Nursing & Midwifery, QUB
Dr Owen Barr, Head of School, School of Nursing, Ulster University
Theresa Barr, Nursing & Midwifery Education, The Beeches