

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

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agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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HSS(MD)21/2008

To: Community Addiction Teams
HSSBs (*for onward dissemination to Independent
Contractors providing substitution services*)
Consultants in Addiction
Independent Sector Provider

Your Ref:

Our Ref: HSS(MD)21/2008

Date: 2 July 2008

Dear Colleague

SUBSTITUTION TREATMENT FOR OPIATE DEPENDENCE

This letter is to promote the 2007 UK Guidelines on Clinical Management for Drug Misuse and Dependence (The Orange Book) (1) issued by the four UK Health Departments to those involved in the provision of substitution treatment as this guidance now replaces the previous 2004 'Northern Ireland Guidelines on Substitution Treatment for Opiate Dependence'.(2)

Substitution treatment increases client engagement with services, reduces illicit opiate use and associated harm, stabilises client's lifestyles and even reduces drug related criminal activity. Evidence of the success of local services is found in the annual "Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database" (3):

- During 2006/07 a total of 463 individuals were in contact with substitute prescribing services and on 31 March 2007 of the 323 individuals receiving substitute medication, 290 had been stabilised.
- Of the 260 people who had been in the substitution scheme long enough to have a clinical review only 21% reported heroin as their main problem drug, compared to 78% when they were first assessed for treatment.
- Of those individuals who had injected, only 15% reported injecting in the 4 weeks prior to their review, compared to 54% who had injected in the 4 weeks prior to their first assessment.
- Lifestyle stabilisation was demonstrated by 1 in 5 of the individuals who on initial assessment were living alone were, on review, living with their spouse or partner and/or children.

These statistics come from anonymised information, collected by the Public Health Information and Research Branch within the DHSSPS, from all statutory specialist addiction services. As experience and skills have increased in primary care, additional guidance has been put in place for where a substitute prescribing patient transfers to the sole care of their GP. Continuing to monitor and evaluate the provision of substitution treatment is vital to ensure the provision of a quality service to meet client's needs.

We also wish to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the following issues included in the 2007 Orange Book, compared to the previous 1999 Orange Book and the 2004 Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Guidelines:

- Despite the successful enhanced service operating locally and providing tailored treatment for clients, it still remains the responsibility of all GPs to provide general medical services for drug misusers. This is a key principle in Chapter 1.
- Rather than a prescriptive model of shared care the emphasis is on partnership working (4) due to the complexity of client needs and variety of services available. This is highlighted in Section 1.5
- The 2007 Orange Book sets out the necessity to provide a care, or treatment plan, for each individual availing of drug treatment and this plan is further broken down into a number of separate domains as set out in Section 3.2.4. Many of the considerations that were included within a contract under the 2004 N.I. Guidelines should now be included within the treatment and care plan, which can also be formulated in such a way that it is signed by the client.
- There is substantial emphasis on psychosocial interventions for drug misuse problems and this is dealt with in Chapter 4.
- There is a specific section addressing the clinicians' response for the client who is failing to benefit from standard treatment, set out in section 5.5.
- Cardiac issues and the necessity, in some instances, for an ECG where Methadone treatment is being considered, is set out in Annex 2, page 98.
- Criminal Justice issues, including care for those in police custody or prison, are dealt with in Sections 7.2 and 7.3.

We would also wish to highlight that in Northern Ireland there are a small, but significant, number of people dependent on over the counter or prescribed opiates. Where deemed clinically appropriate by specialist services these people should also have access to substitution treatment.

Finally it is important to recognise the increasing role for the voluntary sector, especially as a result of their substance misuse many people will encounter physical and psychological health problems that impact heavily upon their ability to form meaningful relationships with partners, children, other family members and the wider community. Social problems, unemployment, homelessness, poverty and involvement with the criminal justice system remain common themes.

References:

- (1) “Drug Misuse and Dependence UK Guidelines on Clinical Management” (Orange Book) – available on line at:
http://www.nta.nhs.uk/publications/documents/clinical_guidelines_2007.pdf
- (2) “Northern Ireland Guidelines on Substitution Treatment for Opiate Dependence, February 2004”, - available on line at:
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/niguide_substitute_treatment.pdf
- (3) “Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database” – available on line at:
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research-h-drugs_alcohol-2.htm
- (4) “Working in Partnership 2005” – available on line at:
http://www.nta.nhs.uk/publications/documents/nta_working_in_partnership_2005_ddsp8.pdf

Other Resources:

There are also a number of resources available to aid in good practice and CPD in relation to controlled drugs and substitution therapy:

- Controlled Drugs in Clinical Practice – available as an online package from www.medicinesNI.com and from April 2008 as a hard copy from NICPPET, School of Pharmacy, 97 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 7BL, or contact www.nicppet.org. This package is available to all healthcare professionals.
- Pharmaceutical Care in Substance Misuse – available from NICPPET for all pharmacists.
- A Guide to Good Practice in Management of Controlled Drugs in Primary Care (England) – available from www.npc.co.uk/controlled_drugs/CDGuide_2ndedition_February.pdf. A Northern Ireland version of this guide will be available on the DHSSPS website in Summer 2008.
- The following NICE Guidelines are also available at <http://www.nice.org.uk> :
 - “Naltrexone for the Management of Opioid Dependence”
 - “Methadone and Buprenorphine for the Management of Opioid Dependence”
 - “Drug Misuse: Opioid Detoxification”
 - “Drug Misuse: Psychosocial Interventions”
 - “Community-based Interventions to Reduce Substance Misuse Among Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children and Young People”

Contact Points

1. DHSSPS Health Development Policy Branch, D4 Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ, Tel: 90 520507.
2. DHSSPS Public Health Information and Research Branch, Annex 2 Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ, Tel: 90 522520
3. Specific advice and guidance in relation to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations may be obtained from:

DHSSPS Inspection and Enforcement Team, D4, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ, Tel: 028 90 532248.