

*From the Chief Medical Officer*  
Dr Michael McBride



Department of

**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÄNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9052 0563  
Fax: 028 9052 0574  
Email: [michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

HSS(MD)34/2008

To: Chief Executives HSC Trusts  
Chief Executives HSS Boards  
Chief Executive Health Promotion Agency  
All Doctors in Northern Ireland  
All Nurses in Northern Ireland  
All Pharmacists in Northern Ireland  
Directors of Public Health (for onward dissemination  
to Sexual Health Teams)  
Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery, QUB  
Head of School of Nursing, UU  
NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development,  
QUB  
Dean of QUB Medical School  
Postgraduate Dean, NIMDTA

Your Ref:

Our Ref: HSS(MD)34/2008

Date: 20 October 2008

Dear Colleague

## **UPDATED GUIDANCE ON HIV – INCLUDING HIV TESTING, MANAGEMENT OF HIV INFECTION AND POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS**

We are writing to draw your attention to a number of key documents which provide guidance in the areas of testing for HIV infection, management of HIV infection and post-exposure prophylaxis after HIV exposure. Full copies of these guidelines are attached as pdf documents to this letter and in addition are available on the websites of Medical Association for Sexual Health, [www.medfash.org.uk](http://www.medfash.org.uk) and the British HIV Association [www.bhiva.org](http://www.bhiva.org) and the Department's website [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk). The three sets of guidance include:

1. **UK National Guidelines for HIV Testing 2008** which has been prepared by the British HIV Association, British Association of Sexual Health and HIV and the British Infection Society. They outline the procedures to be followed when testing for HIV and includes the recommendation that patients should be offered and encouraged to accept HIV testing in a wider range of settings that is currently the case. The DHSSPS Guidance of 2007 refers <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss-md-19-2007.pdf>. Patients with specific indicator conditions should be routinely

recommended to have an HIV test. All doctors, nurses and midwives should be able to obtain informed consent for HIV testing the same way that they currently do for any other medical investigation.

We would ask you to implement these Guidelines as routine. A significant number of people in the UK remain unaware of HIV and thus remain at risk to their own health and passing their virus onto others. Late diagnosis is a very important factor associated with HIV related morbidity and mortality in the UK. As HIV is now a treatable medical condition, it is important that we ensure patients have access to advice and testing in all healthcare settings where appropriate.

2. The second set of Guidance which is attached to this letter entitled '**HIV for non-HIV Specialists, Diagnosing the Undiagnosed – A practical guide for healthcare professionals in secondary care to support improved detection and diagnosis of HIV in the UK**'. This Guidance aims to produce practical help and advice to raise awareness of HIV among non-HIV specialists, to reduce barriers to testing and to ensure that HIV testing becomes routine. The Guidance provides an overview of the common presenting conditions when generalists should consider a diagnosis of HIV and strategies for approaching the offer of an HIV test. These Guidelines compliment the above Guidance for carrying out HIV testing. Of note the full Guideline is available at the end of the booklet, you may wish to download this for your personal use.
3. The third publication which we would like to draw your attention to is the updated Guidance on HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis which has been produced by the UK Chief Medical Officers Expert Advisory Group on Aids (EAGA). It is available on the Department's website [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious\\_diseases/hiv.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/hiv.htm) and also on the Department of Health in England's website [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_088185](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_088185). This Guidance provides definitions on exposure to HIV and risk assessment process and action to be taken. It covers the exact post exposure prophylaxis to be prescribed in the context of HIV exposures and also the position of healthcare workers who are seconded overseas, including students on electives. This Guidance has already been shared with Trusts including Trust Pharmacy Departments.

The epidemiology of HIV infection in Northern Ireland is changing and we are currently seeing an increase in HIV infections in the Province. Information on the epidemiology of HIV is available on the website of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre NI at [www.cdscni.org.uk](http://www.cdscni.org.uk). As in previous communications on this

