

HSS(MD)34/2010



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

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydënter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

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Our Ref: DCL/10/01  
HSS(MD)34/2010

Date: 15 September 2010

**For Action:**

Chief Executives HSC Trusts  
Medical Directors HSC Trusts  
Directors of Nursing HSC Trusts  
Infection Prevention and Control Leads HSC Trusts

**For Information:**

Chief Executive HSC Board  
Chief Executive HSC Public Health Agency,  
Assistant Director (Health Protection) HSC Public Health  
Agency  
Chief Executive Regulation and Quality Improvement  
Agency  
Chief Executive HSE NI  
Regional Estate Management Steering Group

Dear Colleagues

**WATER SOURCES AND POTENTIAL CROSS INFECTION RISKS FROM TAPS  
AND BASINS - INTERIM ADVICE**

The Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has become aware of a number of reports emanating from English NHS Trusts and information on two incidents provided by Public Health Wales concerning outbreaks of infection with pseudomonads.

These incidents have occurred in augmented care wards (e.g. high dependency, adult & neonatal critical care, renal and burns units etc.) and hand hygiene stations have been identified as the source. There is evidence of persistent colonisation of the faucets and that both human and environmental strains have been involved.

It is important for HSC Trusts and their infection control teams to assess the risk to their patient population and where appropriate establish if the water used in hand washing has an unacceptable bacterial count.

This problem is being investigated by the Department of Health for England in conjunction with colleagues from the Devolved Health Departments, but it is necessary for HSC Trusts to take action in the interim. Hand hygiene stations should:

- 1. only be used for the purpose of hand washing
- 2. NOT be used for disposal of any body fluids; and
- 3. be cleaned in a manner that minimises the contamination of the faucet from organisms in the basin trap (via plug hole or overflow).

It is important that where contamination of faucets exists in an augmented care ward that further precautions to protect the patient may be necessary, such as:

- 1. the use of alcohol hand rubs after washing and scrupulous drying of hands; or
- 2. the installation of point of use ( faucet/ terminal end) filters.

It is also important that estates and facility managers review current site engineering protocols and establish that they are in accordance with current guidance and also HTM 04-01: *The control of Legionella, hygiene, "safe" hot water, cold water and drinking water systems* and that manufacturer's instructions with regard to installation and maintenance have been followed.

HSC Trust Chief Executives should ensure that this letter is brought to the attention of Infection Prevention and Control Leads, Directors with responsibility for Estates and Support Services and the Responsible Person (Water) - as defined in HTM 04-01.

Yours faithfully



**Dr Michael McBride**  
Chief Medical Officer



**John Cole**  
Deputy Secretary/Chief Estates Officer

cc: Dr E Mitchell  
Martin Bradley  
Nigel McMahon  
Seamus Camplisson

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• This letter is available at [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk) and also on the DHSSPS Extranet which can be accessed directly at <http://extranet.dhsspsni.gov.uk> or by going through the HPSS Web at <http://www.n-i.nhs.uk> and clicking on DHSSPS.

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