

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

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URGENT COMMUNICATION

HSS (MD) 59/2009

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health & Social
Care Board/ HSC Trusts/NIAS
Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency
(for onward distribution to relevant health protection staff)
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
GP Medical Advisers, Health & Social Care Board
All General Practitioners
(for onward distribution to practice staff)
GP Locums
Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health & Social Care Board
(for cascade to GP Out of Hours services)
Medical Directors of Trusts
*(for onward cascade to:
Staff in A&E Departments
Consultants in Infectious Disease
Consultant Microbiologists
Consultant Pathologists
Services dealing with drug misuse)*
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts
(for onward distribution to all Community Nurses)

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

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Your Ref:

Our Ref: HSS(MD)59/2009

Date: 18 December 2009

Dear Colleague

**POSSIBLE CONTAMINATED HEROIN AT RISK OF CAUSING ANTHRAX IN
INJECTING DRUG USERS**

The Department of Health has been alerted to two confirmed cases of anthrax in heroin injecting drug users (IDUs) in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area of Scotland. One of these cases has sadly died. There is a small number of additional suspected cases currently being investigated.

Initial investigations suggest that the most likely cause of these cases is a contaminated batch of heroin.

We therefore wish to alert you to the possibility of anthrax infection in injecting drug users presenting with severe soft tissue infections or sepsis. For patients who are injecting drug users who present with these symptoms, please contact your local microbiologist for advice on management and investigation.

Please notify any cases of severe soft tissue infection or sepsis in an injecting drug user, who has died or has been sufficiently unwell to require admission to hospital, to the CDSC (NI) (Tel: 028 9026 3765)

Yours sincerely



Dr M McBride
Chief Medical Officer

cc: Dr Ian McMaster
Mr Rob Phipps
Mr Gary Maxwell
Ms Clare Baxter

This letter is available at 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.