

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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All GP Practices (*for onward cascade to relevant staff*)
GP Medical Adviser, HSS Boards
Directors of Public Health, HSS Boards

Dear Doctor

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY SCREENING PROGRAMME IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND QOF REQUIREMENTS

Background

The UK National Screening Committee has advised that screening for diabetic retinopathy be offered to all people with diabetes, aged 12 years and over, and that the screening test should consist of digital retinal photography within an organised screening programme.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme (DRSP)

A comprehensive screening programme, which is based in primary care, has been developed to achieve coverage across the whole of Northern Ireland from 1st April 2008.

The Eastern, Southern and Northern Board will mainly have mobile cameras and the Western Board will have six static cameras. Although the service delivery model varies slightly between Board areas all will operate to an agreed quality assurance framework and standards.

A regional call/recall system for primary care practices has been implemented for the screening programme. The screening service initiates contact with the practice with full details of arrangements for screening provided four months in advance of its next anticipated screening visit.

Quality and Outcome Framework (QOF)

The GMS contract Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) sets out expected standards for a range of services and in relation to Diabetic Retinopathy states that the indicator DM21 is “the percentage of patients with diabetes (aged 17 and over) who have a record of retinal screening in the previous 15 months”.

Over the past two years, patients were prioritized in line with agreed regional criteria to enable the screening service to deliver its planned capacity and ensure that the majority of higher risk category patients received screening. Practices were permitted to report on those patients who did not receive screening from the DRSS under this indicator – 9NNC – Under the Care of Retinal Screeners. This facility was permitted to allow the development of the Regional Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Programme. Practices should NO longer use the code 9NNC for this facility and should co-operate fully with the screening service in order to achieve the QOF points.

From 1st April 2008 all patients will be offered diabetic retinopathy screening on an annual basis by the diabetic retinopathy screening service. Those patients who are not eligible for diabetic retinopathy screening should be exception reported utilising the following codes:

DRSP Exclusion Criteria	Exception Report Definition for QOF	Code
Are under the age of 12 years	Excluded via age searches*	
Have made his/her own informed choice that he/she no longer wishes to be invited for screening	Diabetic retinopathy screening refused	813X
Have no perception of light in either eye, from what ever cause	Diabetic patient unsuitable for screening	9OLD
Are registered blind or partially sighted due to diabetic retinopathy	Diabetic patient unsuitable for screening	9OLD
Are terminally ill and deemed too unwell to participate	Diabetic patient unsuitable for screening	9OLD
Have a physical or mental disability that prevents either screening or treatment	Diabetic patient unsuitable for screening	9OLD
Are currently under the care of an ophthalmologist for the follow up and/or treatment of diabetic retinopathy (this includes those who have had laser treatment for sight threatening retinopathy in the past)	Diabetic patient unsuitable for screening	9OLD

*QOF search is to include those aged 17 and over. However the screening programme is to be offered to all people with diabetes, aged 12 years and over.

Practices should not arrange screening by referral to other professional unless as part of the diabetic retinopathy screening programme.

Further information

For further information on DRSP please contact:

Mrs Joanne Quigg, Regional Co-ordinator, email: jquigg@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk
or telephone: (028) 9055 3709.

For further information on QOF payment please contact: the QOF lead for your Board area.

Yours sincerely



DR MICHAEL McBRIDE
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



MRS CHRISTINE JENDOUBI
DIRECTOR OF PRIMARY CARE

cc: Mrs Joanne Quigg, Regional Co-ordinator, EHSSB
Members of the Diabetic Retinopathy Project Board
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