

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



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

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

HSS(MD) 7/2007

To: Chief Executives, HSS Trusts
Medical Directors HSS Trusts (for onward
distribution to all Consultant Obstetricians)
Chief Executives (new Trusts)
Medical Directors (new Trusts)
Consultant Microbiologists
Directors of Nursing HSS Trusts (for onward
distribution to Infection Control Nurses and all
Midwives)
Nursing Directors (new Trusts)
Directors of Public Health, HSS Boards
CsCDC, HSS Boards
Directors of Nursing HSS Boards
Regional Epidemiologist, CDSC (NI)
Director, HISC, NI

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS/(MD)7/2007
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Dear Colleague

HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTION SURVEILLANCE

Surgical Site Infection (SSI) – Caesarean Section

1. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of recent developments in the surveillance of healthcare associated infection (HCAI) in the HPSS. Surveillance of such infections is an essential activity, which will underpin efforts to control spread of infection and limit the development of antimicrobial resistance. These measures are required to improve quality of care for patients, reduce morbidity and mortality associated with HCAI and to improve other outcome measures in the service such as length of stay.
2. The Healthcare-Associated Infection Surveillance Centre (HISC) was established in 2001 by the DHSS&PS to develop priority surveillance initiatives in the area of HCAs and to assist the acute Trusts in Northern Ireland in undertaking surveillance of HCAs at local level. The Department's first priority in this area was the establishment of a surveillance programme for surgical site infection (SSI) in elective orthopaedics. SSI surveillance of orthopaedic procedures has been conducted in all hospitals since 2003. Reports on this are available at <http://www.hisc.n-i.nhs.uk>.
3. In the DHSS&PS document "Changing the Culture – An Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections in Northern Ireland 2006-2009" (March, 2006) one of the key recommendations is to improve surveillance arrangements for HCAs and to obtain better data on the levels of within Trusts. In Ministers Priorities for Action 2007/08 Trusts are required to have systems in place for the post-discharge surveillance of surgical site infections following Caesarean Section by December 2007.

