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All General Practitioners  
Chief Executives of Boards and Trusts  
Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Ambulance Service  
Directors of Public Health

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Dear Colleague

**GUIDANCE NOTE TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS ON THE TRANSFER OF SERIOUSLY ILL PATIENTS FROM HOME TO HOSPITAL**

I wish to remind you of the primary authority of general practitioners in determining to which hospital a seriously ill patient should be taken by ambulance.

When a general practitioner requests an ambulance to transfer a patient to hospital the normal procedure is that the patient is taken to the nearest hospital or, within the area served by the Eastern Admissions Co-ordinator Centre, to the appropriate hospital accepting emergency admissions. In some circumstances a general practitioner may decide that the clinical seriousness or urgency of the patient's condition necessitates transfer to a different hospital, perhaps one with more specialised staff and facilities. In such instances the general practitioner has primary authority to direct the ambulance staff accordingly and would expect ambulance staff to facilitate this request. Only in exceptional circumstances should a patient be taken to a hospital other than the one requested by the general practitioner.

Yours sincerely



**DR HENRIETTA CAMPBELL**