

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Henrietta Campbell CB



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

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

To: General Practitioners
Chief Executives of HSS Boards & Trusts
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts
Nursing Directors of HSS Trusts
Directors of Public Health
Consultant Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Heads of Midwifery
Regional Community Managers Group

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 3/2004
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Dear Colleague

GUIDANCE ON ANTENATAL CARE – ROUTINE CARE FOR HEALTHY PREGNANT WOMEN

In October 2003 the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) published an antenatal care clinical guideline for the routine care for healthy pregnant women. Although there is no formal agreement to adopt NICE guidance in Northern Ireland, this guideline has been considered in terms of its applicability here. It is considered by both the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer that this guideline articulates important advice, some of which should be applied in Northern Ireland with immediate effect.

Boards and Trusts should take account of this guidance in the commissioning and provision of services to pregnant women. The guideline can be accessed at www.nice.org.uk

BACKGROUND

The guideline is based on the best available evidence on antenatal care and has been developed following a collaborative and consultative approach including health professionals and service users.

The guideline was developed by the National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health. This is a professionally led group based at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and involves the following partners:

- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists;
- Faculty of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care;
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health;
- Association for Genito-Urinary Medicine and Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases;
- Royal College of Midwives.

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The recommendations in the guideline cover the routine care that all healthy pregnant women can expect to receive during their pregnancy. It will involve changes to the schedule of antenatal visits, which should be determined by the function of the appointments. We would wish to see the re-scheduling of antenatal visits implemented as soon as possible.

We are aware that there are some variations in relation to provision of screening of Downs and fetal anomaly. The Department will be undertaking a review of these particular screening programmes. In the interim, where screening is being offered, the tests should comply with the NICE guideline. In addition the Department is reviewing the status of all NICE guidelines and will be clarifying this shortly.

A letter specifically relating to the administering of antenatal Anti-D is also being issued.

Yours sincerely

Dr Henrietta Campbell
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Miss Judith Hill
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER

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