

**HSS(MD)11/2001**

To: All General Practitioners including locums  
Health Visitors  
Consultant Paediatricians

28 March 2001

Dear Colleague

**MMR information for parents and health professionals**

Following the recent media coverage of MMR we have produced updated materials for parents and health professionals. Enclosed are:

- (a) a copy of the revised leaflet for parents;
- (b) updated information for health professionals;
- (c) detailed answers to parents' questions (a shortened version of (b) which can be photocopied for parents who require more detail than is in the leaflet);
- (d) the MMR Story – Mythbuster – designed to be used across the table during a consultation with a parent asking searching questions about MMR; and
- (e) a joint statement issued by:-
  - Dr B Patterson, Chairperson, British Medical Association
  - Dr P Colvin, Chairperson, Royal College of General Practitioners
  - Dr J Jenkins, Regional Representative, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
  - Dr A McMillan, Chairperson, British Association of Community Child Health - Ireland
  - Ms F Donaghy, Royal College of Nursing
  - Mrs B Coyle, Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association.

The Health Promotion Agency have produced (a)-(c) on behalf of the four Health & Social Services Boards and the Department. North Wales Health Authority developed (d) and we are grateful for their permission to enclose it in our packs.

A copy of the leaflet (a) will be issued by Child Health with every MMR invitation they send.

A supply of 300 leaflets is being sent under separate cover to every general practice.

Additional copies will be available on request from the Central Health Promotion Resource Service in each of the Health and Social Services Board areas.

To ensure the information contained in the leaflet is accessible to all parents in Northern Ireland it has been produced in alternative formats and in a number of ethnic minority languages. Details of how to access these resources and information on interpreting services are available on the DHSSPS website [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth). Additional information on immunisation can be found on [www.immunisation.org.uk](http://www.immunisation.org.uk).

A series of Focus Groups with parents of children under 5 were held in Northern Ireland to find out what their attitudes to MMR vaccine are. The findings from the Groups were generally encouraging, most parents continuing to favour the use of MMR vaccine, although there were some concerns caused by recent media reports. A very important finding was that parents trust the information given to them by GPs and Health Visitors, but if these professionals expressed doubts this can lead to doubts in the minds of parents.

The final decision on whether or not to vaccinate a child lies with the parents. However, it is essential that all health professionals discussing immunisation with parents give them a clear message. Parents should know that the health professional clearly and unambiguously supports the use of MMR and that the benefits to be gained from it by far out weigh any small risks involved.

More information can be found on the DHSSPS website [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth) and on [www.immunisation.org.uk](http://www.immunisation.org.uk).

We hope that you find these materials helpful in responding to parents' concerns.

Yours sincerely

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**Dr Henrietta Campbell**  
Chief Medical Officer

**Miss Judith Hill**  
Chief Nursing Officer

cc Consultants in Communicable Disease Control  
Directors of Public Health  
Directors of Nursing of HSS Boards and Trusts