

*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](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9052 0563  
Fax: 028 9052 0574  
Email: [Henrietta.Campbell@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:Henrietta.Campbell@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD)20/2004  
Date: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2004

## **URGENT COMMUNICATION**

**HSS(MD)20/2004**

To:

All General Practitioners  
Chief Executives, Health and Social Services Boards  
Chief Executives, Health and Social Services Trusts (*for onward dissemination to Risk Manager, Health & Social Services Trusts*)  
Medical Directors, Health and Social Services Trusts (*for onward dissemination to all clinicians who use endoscopy*)  
Directors of Nursing, Health and Social Services Boards  
Directors of Nursing, Health and Social Services Trusts (*for onward dissemination to all theatre nurses, infection control nurses and nurses working in endoscopy units*)  
Decontamination Leads, Health and Social Services Trusts  
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control  
Directors of Public Health, Health and Social Services Boards (*for onward dissemination to all general practitioners*)  
Dr Brian Smyth, Regional Epidemiologist CDSC(NI)

Dear Colleague

## **DECONTAMINATION OF ENDOSCOPES**

I previously wrote to you on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004 (Ref: HSS(MD)18/2004) advising you of a look-back exercise undertaken at Lagan Valley Hospital because of concerns over a gastroscope.

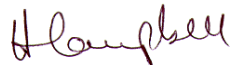
The Department has since initiated a wider review of decontamination of endoscopes in order to provide assurance about the effectiveness of cleaning and decontamination processes across Northern Ireland.

This review has now been carried out in all Trusts. Potential areas of vulnerability were identified in a very small number of scopes that were in use in four Trusts, namely Down Lisburn Trust, Royal Group of Hospitals Trust, Altnagelvin Hospitals Trust, and United Hospitals Trust. Out of more than 1000 scopes used in hospitals in Northern Ireland, a total of 25 are involved. Any scope about which there have been concerns raised has either been immediately withdrawn from service or subjected to revised decontamination procedures. Any patient now attending for endoscopy may be assured that the endoscopes used are being decontaminated to the highest standards.

The Department has now established an Expert Group to review the issues. Evidence to date demonstrates a very low likelihood of transmission of infection through endoscopy. National and international medical experts will undertake a risk assessment to determine whether any further action is required.

The Northern Ireland Endoscopy Helpline 0800 912 0099 is available to patients who need further reassurance or general information.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Henrietta Campbell**  
**Chief Medical Officer**

cc: Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS  
Miss J Hill, Chief Nursing Officer, DHSSPS  
Dr N Morrow, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DHSSPS  
Dr E Mitchell, Principal Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Dr G Mock, Principal Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Dr L Doherty, Senior Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Dr H Neagle, Medical Officer, DHSSPS  
Mr D Sullivan, Director of Secondary Care, DHSSPS  
Mr C Shannon, Information Office, DHSSPS

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