

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**

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URGENT COMMUNICATION

HSS(MD)34-2004

Chief Executives, HSS Boards and Trusts
Directors of Public Health, HSS Boards (*for onward dissemination to General Practitioners*)
All General Practitioners (*for onward distribution to practice staff*)
Medical Directors, HSS Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants*)
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, HSS Boards
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services, HSS Boards/Trusts/CSA
All Community Pharmacists
Directors of Primary Care, HSS Boards
Directors of Nursing, HSS Boards/Trusts
GP Medical Advisers, HSS Boards

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)34-2004
Date: 29th September 2004

Dear Colleague

SHORT-TERM SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFLUENZA VACCINE

1. Yesterday you will have received an 'urgent communication' from the Department alerting you to the current difficulties with the supply of influenza vaccine to the province. You will be aware that the Department does not routinely order, purchase and distribute influenza vaccine as this is the responsibility of primary care practices in conjunction with their community pharmacist. However, in response to the delay in supply of vaccine ordered by the community pharmacists the Department has taken urgent action to secure some limited supplies to commence the influenza campaign next week. This will also involve releasing the Department's own small emergency contingency stock of influenza vaccine.
2. In relation to the supply of influenza vaccine the following actions are required until further notice by primary care practices, community pharmacists and Boards:

a. Action for Primary Care Practices

In view of the fact that influenza vaccine will be available in an **extremely limited supply** general practitioners are asked to conserve vaccine supply for the most vulnerable patients. As such general practitioners are asked to urgently prioritise the following patients for influenza immunisation in the first instance:

- Children with an 'at-risk' medical condition including those who have previously been admitted to hospital for lower respiratory tract disease;
- Adults aged over 75 with an 'at-risk' medical condition.

Primary care practices are asked to urgently identify these patients and amend the orders they have placed with their community pharmacists for vaccine. This will facilitate the community pharmacist placing an order which meets

their needs. Community pharmacists will keep you informed of the timing of delivery of the influenza vaccine supply.

b. Action for Community Pharmacists

The limited supply of influenza vaccine will be held at Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals, 6a Prince Regent Road, Castlereagh, Belfast (Tel: 028 90 795799). General practitioners have been asked to reprioritise the most vulnerable groups for immunisation (see paragraph 1a). On receipt of these amended requirements community pharmacists should order vaccine from Peter Tiffany at Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals. Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals will arrange to invoice community pharmacies for this vaccine. A special arrangement is being made with Central Services Agency for reimbursement.

Community pharmacists should avoid placing large orders for vaccine as the Department wishes to ensure that there is equitable distribution of this limited vaccine supply across the province.

c. Action for Boards

Flu Co-Ordinators at Boards should remind all GP practices and community pharmacists of the need to ensure, that in the context of limited supply of influenza vaccine, it must be conserved for the most vulnerable people in our population.

3. The Department are continuing to liaise with the other UK Health Departments and the vaccine manufacturers to secure continued supplies of vaccine during the month of October. As soon as more information is available we will communicate this with you. In the meantime we would appreciate the co-operation of the service in trying to initially target our Influenza Immunisation Campaign to those who most urgently require to be immunised.
4. The Department will be making a statement to the press on this issue on the morning of 30th September 2004.

For further information please contact:

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Yours sincerely

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Chief Medical Officer

Dr N Morrow
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cc: Mr C Gowdy, Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS
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Influenza/Pneumococcal Working Group Committee
Mrs Beatrice Major, Deputy Principal, GMS Contract Unit, DHSSPS
Prescribing Advisers, Health & Social Services Boards
Regional Drug and Poisons Information Service
Dr Jill Mairs, Regional Procurement Pharmacist
Local Health & Social Care Groups – Chairs/Managers
Dr Philip McClements, NI Prison Service
Dr Brian Dunn, Chair, GPC, BMA
Universities Student Health Services
Occupational Health Departments Boards/ Trusts
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