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To: All Consultant Renal Physicians  
Directors of Public Health at Health & Social Services Boards  
Regional Epidemiologist  
Consultants in Public Health Medicine at Health & Social Services Boards  
Occupational Health Physicians  
Infection Control Doctors

Dear Colleague

## **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR RENAL DIALYSIS/TRANSPLANTATION UNITS: PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES INFECTION**

I enclose a copy of the above new good practice guidelines which are based on the recommendations of a working group convened for Department of Health by the Public Health Laboratory Service. DHSSPS endorse the recommendations made in these guidelines and commend them as good practice for renal dialysis and transplantation units in Northern Ireland.

Dialysis units throughout the UK and Northern Ireland have a good record in preventing the transmission of blood-borne virus (BBV) infection and therefore these guidelines are largely precautionary and designed to reinforce current good practice. Strict observance of universal precautions should minimise the risk of blood-borne virus transmission in renal units and units should aim to implement those precautions. The leading recommendation in this document for the management of patients who are infected with blood-borne virus is for the continued isolation of patients with Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and for a simple rearrangement to segregate patients with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and possibly HIV during dialysis. The main recommendations of the guidance are made in the following areas:

1. Clinical governance and audit
2. Immunisation of patients, staff and carers against HBV
3. Testing patients and staff for BBV
4. Routine precautions against BBV
5. Action to be taken when BBV transmission occurs in a unit
6. Management of BBV infected patients
7. Equipment and prevention of BBV transmission
8. Occupational health

Where renal units have not already implemented any of the recommendations in these guidelines it is suggested that they are phased in over the 12 months beginning 1<sup>st</sup> December 2002.

For further information on this issue please contact:

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Yours sincerely

**DR H CAMPBELL**  
**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**

cc: Mr Simpson  
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This document is also available on  
the Department of Health website at:  
<http://www.doh.gov.uk/cmo/renalguide>