

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

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

URGENT COMMUNICATION

HSS(MD)37-2004

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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

Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)37-2004
Date: 19th October 2004

Dear Colleague

FURTHER UPDATE ON SUPPLY ARRANGEMENTS FOR INFLUENZA VACCINE

1. We are writing to update you on the supply arrangements for influenza vaccine further to our last communication on the 5th October 2004 (Circular Ref: HSS(MD)36-2004).
2. The Department has now secured sufficient vaccine for the entire Influenza Immunisation Programme in Northern Ireland. The updated arrangements for supply are as follows:

Week Commencing 28th September 2004:-

- DHSSPS released its contingency stock of 14,000 doses of influenza vaccine.
- Up to 70,000 doses of influenza vaccine available to GP Practices and Community Pharmacists who ordered their influenza vaccine supplies from suppliers other than Chiron.

Week Commencing 4th October 2004:-

- 52,000 doses of influenza vaccine were delivered to the province on Wednesday 6th October 2004.

Week Commencing 11th October 2004:-

- A further 60,000 doses of vaccine delivered to Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals.

Week Commencing 18th October 2004:-

- 74,000 doses of vaccine from Aventis Pasteur to arrive in the province on Wednesday 20th October 2004.

Week Commencing 1st November 2004

- 50,000 doses of influenza vaccine to be delivered from Wyeth (it may be possible to secure this supply earlier, but this is the subject of further work)

3. You will see from the supply arrangements outlined above that there are sufficient supplies of influenza vaccine available for the Influenza Immunisation Programme through the remainder of October and November. The arrangements in our previous communications stand ie. vaccine delivered to Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals who will continue to co-ordinate the distribution arrangements in line with Departmental guidance.

4. **Prioritisation**

In our previous communication we asked you to re-prioritise patients for immunisation on the basis of clinical need. However, given that we now have a large stock of influenza vaccine available for the Immunisation Programme influenza immunisation arrangements should proceed as normal. **However, GPs should continue to liaise directly with their local Community Pharmacist in relation to the supply of influenza vaccine for their scheduled clinics.**

5. The Department will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that vaccine is equitably distributed across the province to meet the needs of the entire population. The issues in relation to the supply and distribution of vaccine will have caused public anxiety and we hope that the public may now be reassured that all those who require influenza immunisation will be appropriately protected this season. There is currently no evidence that influenza virus is circulating in the community in Northern Ireland at this time.

6. Although the Department does not usually co-ordinate the purchase and distribution of influenza vaccine it had to do so this year due to the manufacturer, from whom GPs and Community Pharmacists had primarily sourced their requirements not being able to supply any vaccine. In light of this event and the immense publicity it has received, the Department will be shortly reviewing the arrangements for the future supply and distribution arrangements for vaccine for the Influenza Immunisation Programme in Northern Ireland.

7. The Department understands that primary care colleagues will have had to reorganise influenza immunisation clinics and make new arrangements for the delivery of the programme this year and would like to thank primary care colleagues for their ongoing commitment to the delivery of the Influenza Immunisation Programme.

For further information please contact:

Dr Lorraine Doherty (Medical Issues) lorraine.doherty@dhsspsni.gov.uk
Senior Medical Officer/Consultant Epidemiologist Tel: 028 90 520717
& Chair of Regional Influenza & Pneumococcal Working Group

Dr Terry Maguire (Pharmaceutical Issues) terry.maguire@dhsspsni.gov.uk
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Tel: 028 90 523236

Dr Jill Mairs (Pharmaceutical Issues) jill.mairs@uh.n-i.nhs.uk
Regional Procurement Pharmacist Tel: 028 90 552386

Yours sincerely

Dr H Campbell
Chief Medical Officer

Dr N Morrow
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Ms J Hill
Chief Nursing Officer

cc: Mr C Gowdy, Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS
Dr E Mitchell, Principal Medical Officer, DHSSPS
Mrs D Kenny, Director of Health Development, DHSSPS
Dr K Booth, Medical Adviser in Primary Care, DHSSPS
Dr Jim Livingstone, Director Primary Care DHSSPS
Mr P Maguire, Information Office, DHSSPS
Mr G Dorrian, Health Protection Team, DHSSPS
Mr Peter Tiffany, Castlereagh Pharmaceuticals
Dr B Smyth, CDSC(NI)
Influenza/Pneumococcal Working Group Committee
Mrs Beatrice Major, Deputy Principal, GMS Contract Unit, DHSSPS
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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
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