

AN (NI) 2001/08

DATE: 4 December 2001

**For Attention and Action by:
Chief Executive of each HSS Trust
General Manager/Chief Executive of each HSS Board
Chief Executive of each Agency**



HEALTH ESTATES
ESTATE POLICY

**NORTHERN
IRELAND
ADVERSE
INCIDENT
CENTRE**

TITLE:

**USE OF ELECTROSURGERY (DIATHERMY) IN
TONSIL AND ADENOID SURGERY**

MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various

PROBLEM

NIAIC Hazard Notice HN(NI)2001/19 issued in October 2001 alerted HPSS organizations of increased incidences in England of secondary haemorrhage following tonsil and adenoid surgery associated with the introduction of single use instruments. The number of reported adverse events to the Medical Devices Agency (MDA) associated with tonsil and adenoid surgery has fallen following issue of the equivalent MDA Hazard Notice. However, MDA have continued to receive reports including one recent fatality associated with the use of diathermy.

DISTRIBUTION

This notice should be brought to the attention of all who need to know or be aware of it, including those listed below, in accordance with local procedures. This will include:

- Directors of Public Health
- Liaison Officers
- Risk Managers
- Health & Safety Officers/Advisors
- Device Managers
- Estates Managers
- Medical Directors
- Clinical Directors
- Nurse Directors
- Operating Theatre Staff
- ENT Surgeons
- General Surgeons
- Plastic Surgeons
- Theatre Nurses
- Supplies Officers
- Private Clinics and Hospitals

Boards/Trusts should ensure that if appropriate, this information is passed to all persons having the responsibility for the premises registered under "THE REGISTERED HOMES (NI) ORDER 1992.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

With immediate effect, diathermy should not be used for tonsil and adenoid surgery. The only exception to this is when the surgeon is unable to control haemorrhage by other means. Surgeons are reminded that all equipment employed in tonsil and adenoid surgery must be discarded after use on a single patient and never reused.

ADVICE

NOTICE

BACKGROUND

Following identification of an increased reported incidence of haemorrhage after tonsil and adenoid surgery in England, MDA and NIAIC issued a Hazard Notice in October 2001 (NIAIC reference HN(NI)2001/19). This identified and addressed a number of problems with single use electrosurgical diathermy forceps. Following the issue of the MDA notice, the number of reported adverse events in England associated with this surgery has fallen. No adverse event reports have been received by NIAIC. However, MDA continue to receive reports including one recent fatality associated with the use of diathermy.

Therefore in the interests of patient safety, surgeons should cease using diathermy for tonsil and adenoid operations until these reports have been thoroughly investigated and the aetiology determined.

The MDA, PSA and the Department of Health in England are working in close co-operation with ENT surgeons and their professional association to find a solution that enables diathermy to be safely reintroduced for tonsil and adenoid surgery.

ENQUIRIES

Enquires to the NIAIC should quote the reference number AN (NI) 2001/08 and be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC)
Health Estates
Estate Policy Directorate
Stoney Road
Dundonald
Belfast BT16 1US
Marked for the attention of Mr Brian Godfrey

Tel: 02890 523714
Fax: 02890 523900
Email: brian.godfrey@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Brian Godfrey
NIAIC Manager



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HOW TO REPORT ADVERSE INCIDENTS

Adverse Incidents relating to medical devices, non-medical equipment, plant and buildings should be reported to NIAIC as soon as possible. Advice on how to report is given in Safety Notice SN (NI) 2000/NIAIC. If you are in doubt about how to report incidents, please speak to your liaison officer or contact NIAIC using the telephone number provided.

*Heath Estates is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Áisíneacht Feidhmeannach don Roinn Sláinte. Serbhíst Sóisialta agus Sábháilteacht Phoiblí*