

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD) 23/2014



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 23/2014  
Date: 7 August 2014

### **For Action**

Chief Executives, HSC Trusts and for cascade to relevant staff  
Chief Executive, HSC Board and for cascade to relevant staff  
Chief Executive, PHA and for cascade to relevant staff  
Executive Medical Director / Director of Public Health, PHA and for cascade to relevant staff  
Chief Executive, NIBTS

### **For information**

Chief Executive, BSO  
Chief Fire Officer, NIFRS  
Northern Ireland Regional Medicines and Poisons Information Service, BHSC  
Regional Emergency Planning Pharmacist, Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service  
[alerts.hscb@hscni.net](mailto:alerts.hscb@hscni.net)

Dear Colleague

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING: UPDATE OF THE PATIENT GROUP DIRECTION TEMPLATES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES BY AUTHORISED HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL TO PATIENTS EXPOSED TO SUSPECTED BIOLOGICAL OR RADIOLOGICAL AGENTS**

### **ACTION REQUIRED**

- All 'relevant organisations'<sup>1</sup> whose staff may be involved in an emergency response involving a biological or radiological agent are required to note revised hyperlinks to UK Patient Group Direction (PGD) templates, which are now permanently available from the Department's Extranet and Resilience Direct websites.
- All 'relevant organisations' are to ensure that all actions, as part of their annual assurance requirement, are completed by the stated deadline.

<sup>1</sup> 'Relevant organisations' in Northern Ireland are the Health and Social Care Trusts, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS), the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service (NIBTS), the Regional Medical Physics Service, the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board.

1. This document supersedes guidance issued on 28 June 2013 (MD Ref. 22/2013).

## Purpose

2. The purpose of this correspondence is to inform that:

- there now **eight** UK Patient Group Direction (PGD) templates, for use by authorised healthcare personnel from 'relevant organisations' following the release of a suspected biological or radiological agent;
- there has been an increase in the initial supply of medicine from 5 days to 10;
- all current PGD templates are permanently available from the DHSSPS Extranet and ResilienceDirect websites; and
- to remind all relevant organisations of the need to review their annual assurance process:
  - confirming that all actions detailed in this circular have been taken forward;
  - that information is updated if necessary; and
  - that these versions of the PGDs are held within emergency plans.

## Appropriate Healthcare Treatment

3. Where members of the public have been exposed to a suspected biological agent they should receive an initial supply of an appropriate antibiotic treatment as prophylaxis against anthrax, plague, tularaemia or other biological agent as a precaution until laboratory results are known.
4. In addition, members of the public and those implementing protective actions who may have been exposed recently, or who will shortly be exposed to significant levels of radioactive iodine, should, receive a single treatment of potassium iodate or potassium iodide.
5. Potassium Iodide is a recent addition to the UK CBRN Stockpiles and will ultimately replace the current stockpiles of Potassium Iodate. This change enhances value for money in terms of cost and shelf life. Where appropriate, all in-date stocks of Potassium Iodate will be issued first, however **not** if this would require a mixed delivery – in which case, only Potassium Iodide would issue.
6. Where such exposure has taken place, plans exist for the delivery of containers of pharmaceuticals, consumables and personal protective equipment (known as 'pods') to the scene by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

## Patient Group Directions (PGDs)

7. To ensure that the most up-to-date versions of PGDs are available during an emergency, 'pods' contain notices informing the reader to use locally held versions. These will have been signed and be familiar to staff through regular training.
8. The eight agreed PGDs are:

1. Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of **ciprofloxacin tablets/suspension** to children under 12 years old exposed to a suspected biological agent.
2. Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of **ciprofloxacin tablets** by healthcare professionals to adults and children aged 12 years and over exposed to a suspected biological agent.
3. Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of **doxycycline capsules** to adults and children aged 8 years and over known to a suspected biological agent.
4. Patient Group Direction for the further supply of **ciprofloxacin tablets/suspension** to children under 12 years old known to be exposed to a biological agent.
5. Patient Group Direction for the further supply of **ciprofloxacin tablets** to adults and children aged 12 years and over known to have been exposed to a biological agent.
6. Patient Group Direction for the further supply of **doxycycline capsules** to adults and children over 12 years known to have been exposed to a biological agent.
7. Patient Group Direction for the supply of **potassium iodate tablets** by authorised persons to adults, children, babies and neonates with known or suspected exposure to radioactive iodine.
8. Patient Group Direction for the supply of **potassium iodide tablets** by authorised persons to adults, children, babies and neonates with known or suspected exposure to radioactive iodine.

9. The most recent versions of the PGDs are available to download from the Department's Extranet website at:

<http://dhsspsextra.intranet.nigov.net/index/circulars/emergency-preparedness/ep-publications.htm>

and from the Department's Resilience Direct website:

<https://www.resilience.gov.uk/RDService/Login.aspx>

## Action Required

10. Upon receipt of this correspondence, 'relevant organisations' whose staff may be involved in an emergency response involving a biological or radiological agent are required to:
  - note amendments to the PGDs and their hyperlink locations; and
  - take the following actions as part of the PGD annual assurance process:

- download and print the relevant PGDs listed from the DHSSPS extranet or ResilienceDirect website using the links provided;
- complete the local authorisation sheets attached to these PGDs;
- retain the authorisation sheets, along with the most current copies of the PGDs, within the organisation's emergency plans; and
- ensure that relevant staff are aware of the PGDs; that core staff to be trained have been identified; and that plans are in place for delivery of appropriate training to those staff.

### Sources of training

11. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) provides 'pod' awareness and deployment training to members of the Hazardous Area Response Team (HART) and to Emergency Departments and other staff expected to use the PGDs by appointment. For further details please contact [epo@nias.hscni.net](mailto:epo@nias.hscni.net).
12. On-line training titled '*Medicines used in A Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear Incident, Northern Ireland*' is available at <http://www.toxlearning.co.uk/>, which includes information about the use of PGDs.

### Audit and assurance

13. The Department requires confirmation that the actions outlined above have been completed. Therefore, all 'relevant organisations' are required to submit their completed compliance returns (Appendix 1) by the end of August 2014. In line with this guidance, completed replies are to be returned by post to DHSSPS, PHD Admin, Room C4.22, Castle Buildings, Stormont. BT4 3SQ. or e-mailed to [phdadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:phdadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Dr Mark Timoney**  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer



**Dr Michael McBride**  
Chief Medical Officer

This letter is available on the DHSSPS website at:

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

Appendix 1

Annual Notification of compliance with Emergency Planning PGD Circular				
Year				
Name of Relevant Organisation				
PGD	Is this PGD relevant to the Organisation	PGD downloaded and current copy held with emergency plans	Local Authorisation sheet signed and copy held with emergency plans	Core staff to be trained have been identified and plans are in place for completion of training
	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of <b>ciprofloxacin tablets/suspension</b> to children under 12 years old exposed to a suspected biological agent				
Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of <b>ciprofloxacin tablets</b> by healthcare professionals to adults and children aged 12 years and over exposed to a suspected biological agent				
Patient Group Direction for the initial supply of <b>doxycycline capsules</b> to adults and children aged 8 years and over known to a suspected biological agent				

Patient Group Direction for the further supply of <b>ciprofloxacin tablets/suspension</b> to children under 12 years old known to be exposed to a biological agent				
Patient Group Direction for the further supply of <b>ciprofloxacin tablets</b> to adults and children aged 12 years and over known to have been exposed to a biological agent				
Patient Group Direction for the further supply of <b>doxycycline capsules</b> to adults and children over 12 years known to have been exposed to a biological agent				
Patient Group Direction for the supply of <b>potassium iodate tablets</b> by authorised persons to adults, children, babies and neonates with known or suspected exposure to radioactive iodine				
Patient Group Direction for the supply of <b>potassium iodide tablets</b> by authorised persons to adults, children, babies and neonates with known or suspected exposure to radioactive iodine				

**Signed**.....

**Printed name** .....

**Date** .....

**Position in organisation** .....