

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD)30/2011



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

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD)30/2011
Date: 22 December 2011

Action:

Chief Executive, Public Health Agency
Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Board
Chief Executive, Business Services Organisation
Executive Medical Director/Director Public Health, Public Health Agency – *for onward distribution to public health screening leads*
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Chief Executives of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to lead directors for colonoscopy services*
Medical Directors of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to consultant surgeons, physicians, radiologists and pathologists*
Directors of Nursing of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to nurse endoscopists and endoscopy nurses*

Information:

All General Practitioners
Members of Bowel Cancer Project Board
Professor P Johnston, Dean Head of School of Medicine, Dentistry & Bio-medical Sciences QUB
Dr T McMurray, NIMDTA
Dr C Loughrey, NIMDTA
Professor L Johnston, Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB
Dr Owen Barr, Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster

Dear Colleague

AGE EXTENSION OF BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMME IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Summary

The purpose of this letter is to require the Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Board, Business Service Organisation and Trusts to work together to extend the bowel cancer screening programme to men and women up to age 71 from April 2012.

Background

The outline for the introduction of the programme is detailed in HSS (MD) 31/2009. It set out arrangements for all eligible men and women aged 60-69, to be invited to complete a Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) kit at home every two years. Those with a positive result are required to have further

investigation for bowel cancer and those with a negative result are offered screening in two years time.

The programme has been rolled out on a phased basis by Trust area:

Phase 1	Western and Northern Trusts (April 2010) South Eastern Trust (June 2010)
Phase 2	Belfast Trust (November 2011) Southern Trust (January 2012)

The next stage of the bowel cancer screening programme is to extend the programme up to the age of 71 from April 2012. The Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Board, Business Service Organisation and Trusts should work together to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place by April 2012 to offer bowel cancer screening to eligible men and women aged between 60 and 71.

The draft Programme for Government 2011-15, currently out for public consultation, includes a commitment to extend the age range for bowel cancer screening up to age 74 across all Trust areas from 2014/2015. As approximately 80% of cases of bowel cancer occur in people aged 60 and over. The planned extension up to the age of 71 years from April is the next milestone in the roll out of the programme.

Resources

Resources for the extension of the bowel cancer screening programme up to age 71 are already included in the Public Health Agency's funding allocation.

Actions

The Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Board, Business Service Organisation and Trusts should work together to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place by April 2012 to offer bowel cancer screening to eligible men and women aged between 60 and 71.

Commissioners and Trusts should ensure that:

- appropriate fail-safe mechanisms in place to ensure that screening is offered to all eligible people;
- those who require referral are followed up in a timely and appropriate way;
- arrangements are in place for the timely management of those who are diagnosed with bowel cancer.

The programme should meet the standards set in the *“Northern Ireland Bowel Cancer Screening Programme - Quality Assurance Standards and*

Criteria". All care should also meet the DHSSPS Quality Standards for Health and Social Care.

Further information

For further information please contact Dr Margaret Boyle, Senior Medical Officer, DHSSPS. Email margaret.boyle2@dhsspsni.gov.uk or telephone (028) 90 520713.



Dr M McBride
Chief Medical Officer

This letter is available on the DHSSPS website at
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/cmo_communications.htm