

Reference: HSC (SQSD) 33/18

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Management of life threatening bleeds from arteriovenous fistulae and grafts

For Action:

Chief Executives HSC Trusts for cascade to:

Directors of Acute Services

Directors of Renal Services

Chief Executive HSCB/PHA

Chief Executive RQIA

Chief Executive, NIMDTA

Chief Executive, NIAS

For Information:

Distribution as listed at the end of this circular.

Related documents:

Implementation: 13th May 2019

DoH Safety and Quality Circulars including Patient Safety Alerts can be accessed on:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/safety-and-quality-standards/safety-and-quality-standards-circulars>

SUMMARY

NHS Improvement has issued Patient Safety Alert [NHS/PSA/RE/2018/007](#) - "Management of life threatening bleeds from arteriovenous fistulae and grafts" to help staff, carers and patients recognise the warning signs of life threatening bleeds in haemodialysis patients.

ACTION

Chief Executives of HSC Trusts should:

- Identify a senior clinical leader in the organisation to lead the response to this alert.
- Develop an implementation plan to ensure the availability of local guidance that incorporates the advice in the British Renal Society's resources for the detection and management of life-threatening bleeds (LTB).
- Use local communication strategies (such as newsletters and awareness campaigns, etc) to ensure that all relevant staff and patients are aware of and have access to these resources.

Chief Executive, HSCB and PHA should:

- Disseminate this circular to all relevant HSCB/PHA staff, community services and general practices.
- Consider it through the normal HSCB/PHA processes for assuring implementation of safety and quality alerts.

Chief Executive, RQIA should:

- Disseminate this circular to all appropriate Independent Sector providers.

Chief Executive, NIMDTA should:

- Disseminate this circular to doctors in training in all relevant specialties.

BACKGROUND

Haemodialysis removes the waste products and extra fluid that build up in the blood of those whose kidneys no longer function properly and relies on easy access to a patient's blood vessels. Preferred methods for permanent access are an arteriovenous fistula (AVF) or arteriovenous graft (AVG) that provide a connection between the artery and vein. Connecting an artery to a vein allows for an increased blood flow rate and faster removal of toxins from the blood during dialysis.

Blood loss from an AVF or AVG can usually be controlled by applying pressure to the site. However, rarely bleeds do not resolve and, due to the rate and volume of blood loss, become life threatening. Although LTB can occur without warning, there are cases where patients presenting to healthcare had warning signs of possible LTB from their AVF or AVGs that were not recognised.

National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) identified 11 reports of life-threatening bleeds (LTB) in a recent three-year period; in seven of those reports the patient died.

The alert signposts providers to resources produced jointly by The British Renal Society and the Vascular Access Society of Britain and Ireland to help staff, carers and patients recognise the warning signs. Providers are asked to ensure local guidance incorporates the advice in these resources, and to raise awareness of their availability.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the content of this circular should be addressed to:

Safety Policy Branch
Department of Health
Room D1.4
Castle Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 90528322
qualityandsafety@health-ni.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Dr Paddy Woods
Deputy Chief Medical Officer

Distributed for information to:

Executive Medical Director/Director of Public Health, PHA
Director of Nursing and Allied Health Professions, PHA
Director of Performance Management & Service Improvement, HSCB
Safety and Quality Alerts Team, HSC Board
Prof. Donna Fitzsimons, Head of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB
Prof. Pascal McKeown, Head of Medical School, QUB
Prof. Carmel Hughes, Head of School of Pharmacy QUB
Prof. Sonja McIlfratrick, Head of School of Nursing, UU
Prof. Paul McCarron, Head of Pharmacy School, UU
Chief Executive, NIPEC
Staff Tutor of Nursing, Open University
Director, Safety Forum
NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development
Clinical Education Centre
NI Royal College of Nursing