

**From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride**

**HSS(MD) 6/2017**



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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Our Ref: HSS(MD) 6/2017

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## **FOR INFORMATION**

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social  
Care Board/HSC Trusts

GP Medical Advisers, Health and Social Care Board

All General Practitioners and GP Locums

All General Dental Practitioners

All Community Pharmacists

## **PLEASE SEE FULL CIRCULATION LIST ATTACHED**

Dear Colleagues

## **ANTIBIOTIC USE AND ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)**

The purpose of this letter is to advise Trusts, GPs and dentists of the Department's priorities over the coming years with regard to the need to address the problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Tackling AMR is a top public health priority globally and for Northern Ireland. The emergence and spread of infections caused by organisms that are resistant to treatment by existing antimicrobials is a major and growing threat to modern medical and veterinary practice, and is regarded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the most serious global threats to health.

Northern Ireland has the highest levels of antibiotic prescribing of any UK country. Measured by defined daily dose per 1000 population per day, across hospital and community settings, we prescribe 30% more antibiotics than prescribers in England.

In 2014 the then Prime Minister asked the economist Lord Jim O'Neill to chair a major international review on antimicrobial resistance. The final report of the review, published in May 2016, sets out the potentially catastrophic consequences of a global failure to take the necessary actions. The O'Neill Review makes the human and economic case for tackling AMR, and proposes a series of priority actions that need to be taken, at international, national on local levels. The report is available at:

[https://amr-review.org/sites/default/files/160525\\_Final%20paper\\_with%20cover.pdf](https://amr-review.org/sites/default/files/160525_Final%20paper_with%20cover.pdf)



Following the publication of the O'Neil report, the Secretary of State for Health announced four proposed ambitions to tackle AMR, two of which are concerned directly with human healthcare:

*"We will reduce healthcare-associated gram negative blood stream infections by 50% by 2020; and*

*"We will reduce inappropriate prescribing by half by 2020".*

All four UK countries support these ambitions, and interim goals are being considered.

At this stage there remain significant questions of detail that need to be resolved at national level. As regards the ambition to reduce inappropriate prescribing of antimicrobials, Public Health England have undertaken modelling work to inform how this can be delivered with minimal risk of unintended consequences, and to establish an agreed definition of "inappropriate prescribing".

The Department is committed to delivering the O'Neill ambitions and with the Public Health Agency, through the PHA-led HCAI/AMS Improvement Board, will work with the Trusts, Primary Care and other colleagues as these issues are clarified."

Yours sincerely



**Dr Michael McBride**  
**Chief Medical Officer**

cc: Executive Medical Director/Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency  
(for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff)  
Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency  
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency  
Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health and Social Care Board (for  
cascade to GP Out of Hours services)  
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (for onward distribution to all relevant staff)  
Directors of Nursing, HSC Trusts (for onward distribution to all Community  
Nurses, and Midwives)  
RQIA (for onward transmission to all independent providers including  
independent hospitals)  
HSCB Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management (for onward  
distribution to Community Pharmacists)

General Dental and Ophthalmic Services Branch, Department of Health  
(for distribution to General Dental Practitioners via HSCB)  
Chief Executive, Clinical Education Centre  
Chief Executive, NIPEC  
Head of School of Nursing at University of Ulster; at Queens University;  
the Open University;  
Chief Executive NI Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA)  
Professor Colin Adair, NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development

This letter is available on the DoH website at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>