



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Department of Health

NHS Management Executive
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague

AIDS/HIV INFECTED HEALTH CARE WORKERS: GUIDANCE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF INFECTED HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND PATIENT NOTIFICATION

Summary

1. This letter draws attention to the attached revised UK guidance on the management of AIDS/HIV infected health care workers and patient notification.

2. The guidance replaces *AIDS/HIV Infected Health Care Workers: Guidance on the Management of Infected Health Care Workers: Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS, 1994* and *AIDS/HIV Infected Health Care Workers: Practical Guidance on Notifying Patients: Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS, 1993*.

3. The revised guidance is based on recommendations of the UK Expert Advisory Group on AIDS. The booklet retains many of the guidelines from the earlier documents and also reflects the conclusions of an independent review commissioned by the Department of Health (England) of the risk of HTV transmission from an infected health care worker to a patient. Further information is contained in the Annex.

Action

4. **Health Board General Managers and Trust Chief Executives** are asked to ensure that these guidelines are brought to the attention of all appropriate managers and staff, including directors of occupational health, consultant occupational health physicians, occupational health nurses and infection control doctors and nurses. Copies of the guidance should be distributed to all GP practices, to all dental practices and to all hospital and community dentists as soon as bulk supplies are delivered.

25th March 1999

Addressees

For action

General Managers, Health Boards
Chief Executives, NHS Trusts

For information

Medical Directors, NHS Trusts
Directors of Public Health
CADOs
Executive Nurse Directors, NHS
Trusts
HB AIDS Co-ordinators
CANOs
Director. SCIEH
Deans of Medical/Dental Schools
Academic Heads of Depts of Nursing
Directors of HIV Regional Virus Labs
Committee of Scottish Higher
Education Principals
General Manager, CSA
General Manager, State Hospitals
Board for Scotland
Chief Executive, HEBS
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5. The guidelines are available on the Department of Health (England) website (<http://www.open.gov.uk/doh/aids.htm>).

Yours sincerely

DAVID R STEEL
Head of Health Gain

Background information

1. The enclosed guidance reflects the conclusions of an independent review commissioned by the Department of Health (England) of the risk of HIV transmission from an infected health care worker to a patient. The guidance refers to a sub-category of exposure prone procedures considered likely to have posed a relatively higher risk of HIV transmission to patients if they have been performed by an HIV infected health care worker.

2. The guidance offers explicit advice to help health care workers recognise when they may have been at risk of exposure to HIV and prompts them to seek HIV testing, and if positive, advice about the need for any modification of their working practices. Health care workers who have AIDS are now advised of the need to comply with more frequent occupational supervision to detect the onset of any impairment which may affect their fitness to practise, or may put their health at risk.

3. Extra emphasis is given to safeguards to protect the confidentiality of infected health care workers, particularly when exposure prone procedures have been performed and a patient notification exercise is underway.

4. In addition, the guidance includes a new Annex which provides examples of advice agreed by the UK Advisory Panel for Health Care Workers infected with Blood-borne viruses about exposure prone procedures, together with a cautionary preamble about their interpretation.

5. The guidance will be kept under regular review and revised in the future if accumulating epidemiological information suggests this is appropriate.

6. It is suggested that health service employers should:

- Consider revising local policies for the management of HIV infected workers and the conduct of patient notification exercises to take account of this updated guidance.
- Consider putting in place arrangements for all health care workers to be reminded regularly about the local policy, and in particular their duty to recognise any risk of HIV to which they may have been exposed and to seek testing without delay.
- Ensure that all health care workers are made aware of local arrangements for obtaining occupational health advice and any other relevant points of contact.

7. Directors of Public Health may wish to update local protocols for the management of patient notification exercises.

8. General medical and dental practices in receipt of this guidance are requested to bring it to the attention of medical or dental practitioners working in their practice; and to take the action described above in respect of their health care employees (e.g. practice nurses).

9. Medical, dental and nursing schools are requested to bring this guidance to the attention of students; and to introduce the principles in this guidance into the student curriculum as soon as possible in conjunction with those commended in *Guidance for Clinical Health Care*

Workers: Protection Against Infection with Blood-borne Viruses: Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS and the Advisory Group on Hepatitis (UK Health Departments 1999).