



National Health Service in Scotland
Management Executive

St Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Colleague

**THE SAFE USE AND CONTROL OF MEDICINES
IN PAEDIATRICS**

Summary

1. A letter from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Pharmaceutical Officer has gone to all Chairmen and Secretaries of Drug and Therapeutic Committees at Area, Trust and Directly Managed Unit level asking them to review their procedures for the safe use and control of medicines in paediatrics. A copy of the letter is attached for information and action if required.

Action

2. General Managers are asked to draw this letter to the attention of the appropriate medical, pharmaceutical and nursing staff.

Paula S. Warrington

MRS P S WARRINGTON

COMMON SERVICES AGENCY	
RECEIVED:	
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[December 1993

Addressees

For Action
General Managers
Health Boards

For Information
Unit General Managers

Chief Executives NHS
Trusts

Chief Executives
Designate

CAMOs
CAPOs
CANOs

Medical Directors

Pharmaceutical
Directors

Directors of Nursing

Enquiries to:

Mrs P S Warrington
Pharmaceutical
Division
Room 26B
St Andrew's House
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG
Tel: 031-244-2778
Fax: 031-244-2683



To: All Chairmen and Secretaries of Area,
Trust & DMU Drugs & Therapeutics Committees

30th November 1993

Dear Colleague

THE SAFE USE AND CONTROL OF MEDICINES IN PAEDIATRICS

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is to ask Chairmen of Drug and Therapeutics Committees to review their procedures for the safe use and control of medicines in paediatrics. This letter also draws to your attention a specific initiative to minimise the risk of accidental overdose, particularly in paediatrics, when complex dosage calculations are involved.

Background

2. The Department issued guidelines for the safe and secure handling of medicines (NHS Circular No 1988(GEN)33) requesting that they be implemented by Health Boards. Advice on improving management systems for the safe and efficient use of medicines in hospital has previously been issued by the Department, NHS Circular No 1988(GEN)32 "The Way Forward for Hospital Pharmaceutical Services" and the CRAG report "Hospital Drug Formularies: an Indicator of Quality" (issued May 1993).

3. It is important that Drug and Therapeutics Committees keep under review procedures for the safe use and control of medicines and that these are regularly updated.

4. Children and particularly neonates differ from adults in their response to drugs. Specific paediatric formulations are not always available, necessitating the use and storage of adult formulations in paediatric units. The prescribing and administration of medicines for children treated in wards and clinics primarily dealing with adults presents a particular risk and control and use of medicine policies should reflect that.

5. Policies and procedures for the use of medicines in children should be available and readily accessible to all staff involved in the prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicines. Staff must be familiar with the policies and procedures particularly for those medicines associated with special risks such as medicines with a narrow therapeutic index or those used by the intrathecal route etc.

6. A recent problem with the calculation of an aminoglycoside dosage in a neonatal unit resulted in the area Drug and Therapeutics committee preparing a Code of Practice to be adopted when complex dosage calculations are involved and this will be made available to all Drug and Therapeutics Committees when completed. Your committee may wish to consider adopting a similar approach.

Action

Chairmen of Drug and Therapeutic Committees are asked to:

- i Ensure that local procedures for the control and safe use of medicine are regularly reviewed.
- ii Review specifically the control and use of medicines for children.
- iii Consider a Code of Practice to apply where complex dosage calculations, particularly in paediatrics, are involved.

Robert Kendall

Chief Medical Officer

Bill Scott

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer