



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department

Dear Colleague

INFECTION CONTROL AND CLEANING: NURSING ISSUES

1. This Letter reinforces and clarifies nursing responsibilities in relation to the prevention and control of healthcare associated infection (HAI) and environmental cleanliness. Public confidence in this area will only be restored by tangible improvements in infection control and standards of cleaning.
2. This aligns with The NHSScotland Code of Practice for the Local Management of Hygiene and HAI (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/health/lmhhai-00.asp>) issued by the HAI Task Force in May 2004. The Code of Practice defines local management powers and responsibilities for delivering safe clinical care through ensuring high standards of hygiene and related measures to tackle HAI in the healthcare environment.
3. The prime intention of the Code of Practice is to support action at local level to improve safety by reducing the risk of HAI for patients, staff, visitors and the wider public. Whilst it is important that all staff operate within a culture of "Infection Control is everyone's responsibility", this Letter reinforces the importance of the nursing contribution to this culture.
4. I should be grateful if this document could be circulated by Chief Executives of NHS Boards to Chief Executives of Operating Divisions, Infection Control Managers (and thereby to local Infection Control Committees), and Medical Directors.

18 March 2005

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Nursing Directors
Chief Executive, NHS Education for Scotland

For information

Chief Executive, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland
Directors of Public Health
Clinical Director, Health Protection Scotland

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Education

5. The Chief Nursing Officer requires that all Grade G Sisters/Charge Nurses undertake the “Cleanliness Champions” educational programme forthwith (www.nes-hai.info). Local implementation of this programme should take account of present workload and available access to the required IT resources. NHS Education for Scotland (NES) provides support (e.g. registration and recording programmes, issue of materials) for those presently undertaking this multidisciplinary programme. NES will provide additional support for Grade G Sisters/Charge Nurses, and will issue further information shortly.
6. An update on progress in implementing this requirement should be emailed to Linda.Middleton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk by end October 2005. Healthcare staff in all disciplines are encouraged to consider becoming “Cleanliness Champions”.
7. All nurses should ensure that their annual development plans contain specific objectives for continuing professional development in HAI.
8. Effective hand hygiene practice is considered to be one of the most important measures in the prevention and control of infection. Successful implementation of The Code of Practice relies on the integration of best practice, such as effective hand hygiene, into routine activities. Sisters/Charge Nurses are asked to ensure that members of staff undertake the NES stand-alone hand hygiene educational resource (www.nes-hai.info). Sisters/Charge Nurses are reminded of the importance of self-audit activity of compliance with good hand hygiene within their clinical areas. Infection Control Committees should ensure that this issue is included in clinical governance audit plans.

Cleaning

9. Sisters/Charge Nurses are responsible for ensuring safe working conditions within their clinical areas. This includes all aspects of environmental cleanliness. **Chief Executives should ensure that Sisters/Charge Nurses have the authority to require local cleaning services to act on any problems identified.**
10. If patients, visitors or staff have concerns over cleaning in healthcare premises, the Sister/Charge Nurse should be their first point of contact. If concerns remain, the hospital’s formal complaints procedure should be used, and the Chief Executive will be responsible for investigating and resolving the issue. The public should be made aware of this through posters (*Visitors – help us to fight infection* was recently distributed by SEHD – see www.scotland.gov.uk/hai), and this information should be included in any appropriate locally produced patient information leaflets.

Public Involvement

11. Sisters/Charge Nurses are expected to exercise their responsibilities for setting sensible limits for visiting, particularly controlling visiting times and numbers of visitors, ensuring visitors don’t sit on beds or touch equipment, and generally keeping risks to patients to a minimum.
12. Maintaining a clean environment and reducing risks of infection is everyone’s responsibility – management, frontline staff, patients and the public. It is important that NHSScotland maintains a high level of awareness in all groups.

Guidance on prevention and control of infection

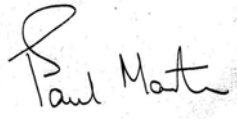
13. Sisters/Charge Nurses are responsible for ensuring that any local or national infection control guidance provided by the Infection Control Team is implemented within their areas.

14. The contents of this Letter should be read in conjunction with HDL(2005)8 which relates to organisational issues in infection control.

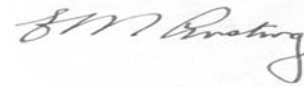
Yours sincerely



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DR E M ARMSTRONG
Chief Medical Officer