

To: All Community Pharmacists

Western Office
Gransha Park House
15 Gransha Park
Clooney Road
LONDONDERRY
BT47 6FN

HSCB Ref: ICPL/2017/024

Tel : 02895 361010
Fax : 02895 361166
Web Site : www.hscboard.hscni.net

17th October 2017

Dear Colleagues

Needlestick Injury Policy

Needlestick or sharps injuries occur when a needle or other sharp instrument accidentally penetrates the skin. If the needle or sharp instrument is contaminated with blood or other body fluid, there is the potential for transmission of infection. There may be occasions when staff who work in a community pharmacy come across used injecting equipment, e.g. if the pharmacy provides a needle and syringe exchange service, or if there is patient-returned diabetic equipment. Following a recent incident in a community pharmacy where a member of staff accidentally pricked their finger on a needle whilst carrying out routine duties, I would like to highlight a number of key pieces of learning to all community pharmacies.

It should be noted that pharmacy contractors as independent contractors have a general responsibility for the health and safety of staff who work for them, as per HSE guidance: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/employers.htm>. In this regard, employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this. However, while not obviating this duty, in the event of a needlesstick injury, it is important that individuals are managed appropriately. Fundamentally, it is important that there are processes in place to ensure that staff **never** directly handle any used injecting equipment.

Other learning identified from this incident was:

1. Pharmacy specific needlesstick injury policy

It is essential to have a needlesstick injury policy in place in the pharmacy so that staff are aware of what returns should/should not be accepted from

patients, and the processes to follow when accepting used sharps from patients. **All** staff working in the pharmacy should receive training on this policy regardless of their role, as unforeseen accidental injuries involving needles or sharps may occur in the community pharmacy environment.

2. Action to take in the event of an injury

Due to the possibility of needles or sharps being contaminated with viruses originating from blood and the potential for transmission of infection, the policy should include advice on immediate management of the injury and an emphasis on the necessity to seek emergency care **immediately**, whether via an Occupational Health Service or hospital Emergency Department, more usually the latter. It should also advise that refusal to do so is at the staff member's own risk as effective treatment may be dependent on the appropriate care being provided within a set timescale.

All staff members should sign this policy once training has been provided and the pharmacy should maintain a record of staff who have been trained.

You are asked to review the current arrangements in your pharmacy and take the required actions to ensure the safe management of returned sharps by your staff.

If you have any queries, please contact your local Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely



Mr Joe Brogan
Assistant Director Integrated Care
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management

RE: Needlestick Injury Policy – Distribution List – [insert ✓ as appropriate]

	To – for Action	Copy		To – for Action	Copy
HSC Trusts			PHA		
CEXs			CEX		
Medical Director			Medical Director/Director of Public Health		
Directors of Nursing			Director of Nursing/AHPs		
Directors of Social Services			PHA Duty Room		
Governance Leads			AD Health Protection		
Directors of Acute Services			AD Service Development/Screening		
Directors of Community/Elderly Services			AD Health Improvement		
Heads of Pharmacy			AD Nursing		
Allied Health Professional Leads			AD Allied Health Professionals		
			Clinical Director Safety Forum		
NIAS			HSCB		
CEX			CEX		
Medical Director			Director of Integrated Care		
RQIA			Director of Social Services		
CEX			Director of Commissioning		
Medical Director			Alerts Office		✓
Director of Nursing			Dir PMSI & Corporate Services		
Director for Social Care					
NIMDTA			Primary Care (through Integrated Care)		
CEX / PG Dean			GPs		
QUB			Community Pharmacists	✓	
Dean of Medical School			Dentists		
Head of Nursing School			Open University		
Head of Social Work School			Head of Nursing Branch		
Head of Pharmacy School			DoH		
Head of Dentistry School			CMO office		
UU			CNO office		
Head of Nursing School			CPO office		
Head of Social Work School			CSSO office		
Head of Pharmacy School			CDO office		
Head of School of Health Sciences (AHP Lead)			Safety, Quality & Standards Office		
Clinical Education Centre			NI Social Care Council		
NIPEC			Safeguarding Board NI		
GAIN Office			NICE Implementation Facilitator		
NICPLD			Coroners Service for Northern Ireland		
NI Medicines Governance Team Leader for Secondary Care					

