

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



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

**All General Practitioners**, including GP  
Specialist Registrars and GP Locums  
**Medical Directors HSC Trusts** – for onward  
dissemination to all doctors dealing with  
admissions to hospital; Clinical governance  
leads  
**Medical Director Ambulance Trust**  
**Nursing Directors HSC Trusts** – for onward  
dissemination to all nurses dealing with  
admissions, all infection control nurses.  
**Consultant Microbiologists**  
**Directors of Pharmacy** – HSC Trusts and  
Boards  
**Directors of Public Health** – for onward  
dissemination to on call public health doctors  
**Consultants in Communicable Disease  
Control**  
**Medical Director RQIA**

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Dear Colleague

**Regional discharge and patient transfer protocol for patients with  
*Clostridium difficile* infection.**

We are writing to inform you that the Guidelines and Audit Implementation Network (GAIN) have developed a regional protocol for the above, and we ask that the actions outlined in the attached protocol are adopted with immediate effect.

The development of the regional protocol is in response to a recommendation made by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) in their

recent review of the *Clostridium difficile* outbreak in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. The RQIA expressed concern that systems were not in place for hospitals to easily identify patients who had a previous history of *Clostridium difficile* infection.

**IR7** 'Regional guidance should be developed for effective communication about *Clostridium difficile* cases between hospitals, primary care practitioners and care homes. Systems should be established to ensure that information is available and guidance provided about treatment including antibiotic prescribing, for patients who have a recurrent episode of *Clostridium difficile* and are admitted to a different facility.'

### **The GAIN Protocol**

This protocol aims to address this gap in the current arrangements and will also improve communication and exchange of information between acute hospitals, GPs and the independent care sector following the admission or discharge of a patient with a diagnosis of *Clostridium difficile* infection.

The protocol provides advice for medical and nursing staff in Trusts, GPs, care homes, the ambulance service on hospital admissions and discharges, on the actions needed and includes forms to be completed if a patient has been diagnosed as having *C. difficile*.

We recognise that GP referral procedures may not yet be standardised across the region, but the majority of practices use an electronically generated referral form. The data set does not currently include a field for *C. difficile*, so in the interim, we ask that you use the GP Patient Admission form in Appendix 1 of the attached document. The form can be downloaded from [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/letters-and-urgent-communications-2009.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/letters-and-urgent-communications-2009.htm)

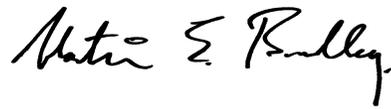
This protocol **will not** replace the current CREST 'Protocol for the Inter Hospital transfer of patients and their records' but it will enhance the existing practice and capture the necessary information on these patients.

We are very grateful to GAIN for agreeing to take on the development of this protocol which will be formally launched in March. In the interim, because, prevention and control of *Clostridium difficile* infection is a key public health and patient safety issue, we ask you to implement the use of this protocol with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely



**Dr M McBride**  
**Chief Medical Officer**



**Mr Martin Bradley**  
**Chief Nursing Officer**

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Dr L Doherty  
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Mr A Brown  
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Mrs A McLernon  
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