

To:
Trust Chief Executives & Medical Directors
NIAS Chief Executive & Medical Director
GP practices
Out-of-hours Medical Services
Community Pharmacists

12-22 Linenhall Street
BELFAST
BT2 8BS

PHA Tel : (0300) 555 0114
HSCB Tel : (0300) 555 0115

Web Site:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>
www.hscboard.hscni.net

3rd December 2020

Dear Colleague,

NATIONAL PATIENT SAFETY ALERT – STEROID EMERGENCY CARD TO SUPPORT EARLY RECOGNITION AND TREATMENT OF ADRENAL CRISIS IN ADULTS - AN UPDATE ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND POSITION

We are writing to give you an update on the development of a NI steroid card.

Background:

As you may be aware, the National Patient Safety Alert [Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults](#) was issued in August 2020. Adrenal insufficiency is a life-threatening endocrine emergency; prompt management can save lives. This alert asks healthcare providers to ensure that:

- All eligible patients are issued with a Steroid Emergency Card
- Processes are in place to check if a patient has a Steroid Emergency Card ahead of any emergency treatment, elective surgery, or other invasive procedures.

Following this, DH issued a letter confirming that the HSCB should work with the PHA and HSC Trusts to develop a Steroid Emergency Card¹ specifically for patients on Northern Ireland and work to support implementation of this. The NI card should be based on the Steroid Emergency Card (available from the [Society of Endocrinology](#)) and should be readily available to all healthcare professionals who prescribe, dispense or administer steroids **to eligible patients who are at risk of adrenal insufficiency / crisis.**

Progress with implementation of the National Patient Safety Alert:

¹ [HSS \(MD\) 63/2020: CMO/CPO Circular & NatPSA](#)

A Northern Ireland Implementation Group has now been established to develop a NI steroid emergency card along with any associated guidance and patient information that is required. The group will aim to have the work completed within the timeframe outlined in the DH letter (13th May 2021) and further correspondence will be issued once this is complete.

Action for healthcare professionals:

All appropriate staff should be aware of the patient groups at risk of adrenal insufficiency and familiar with the signs and symptoms of acute adrenal insufficiency. Patients potentially at risk include those who are taking a range of oral, inhaled and topical steroid products. These patients should continue to be managed in line with existing practice and guidelines.

A list of the **patients at potential risk** and further information is available from the Society for Endocrinology Clinical Committee and the Royal College of Physicians Patient Safety Committee (2020) [Guidance for the prevention and emergency management of adult patients with adrenal insufficiency](#)

If you have any queries please contact HSCB Pharmacy Adviser Sinead.McElroy@hscni.net

Yours sincerely,



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



Dr Stephen Bergin
Director of Public Health and
Medical Director (Interim)
PHA