

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



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

HSS(MD) 17/2019

For Action:

Chief Executives of HSC Board, PHA and BSO

(for distribution to all relevant staff)

Chief Executives HSC Trusts

(for distribution to all relevant staff)

For information:

**All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for
onward distribution to relevant practice staff)**

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Our Ref: HSS(MD) 17/2019

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PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleague

USE OF HERNIA MESH

The use of mesh for hernia repair is a long standing surgical procedures that is carried out worldwide and since its introduction, there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of patients suffering hernia recurrence and therefore, a reduction in numbers of those needing further surgery.

However, there have been recent media reports of patients suffering disabling complications from the use of mesh for hernia repair. I have met with a number of patients so affected. They felt that they were not fully informed regarding their condition, treatment options and possible complications that may arise. This was further compounded when presenting to health services with distressing painful symptoms following hernia repair. They did not receive an empathic professional response – typically describing the response as “dismissive”.

It is important that we work in partnership with our patients in order that good clinical decisions may be made and patients are able to decide on the course of their treatment from a fully informed position. Please continue to take the time necessary to ensure that patients are fully informed about their treatment options, the risks associated with treatment and those risks associated with non- treatment.

These reflect the principles espoused in both the Department’s guidance on consent and that of the GMC (whose updated guidance is anticipated later this year).

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/consent-guides-healthcare-professionals>

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/consent>

The Royal College of Surgeons of England released a statement in September 2018 summarising the evidence and actions necessary, captured in the words “*patients suffering complications or pain need help, not silence.*”

www.rcseng.ac.uk/news-and-events/media-centre/press-releases/rcs-response-to-hernia-mesh-complications/

Similarly, an evidence review and position statement from the Welsh Government was published in January of this year.

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-use-mesh-hernia-repair>

For colleagues in general practice, patients that present with complications related to their hernia mesh surgery should be referred promptly to the Health and Social Care Trust and, if possible, the surgeon that carried out their procedure for appropriate care and treatment.

I welcome your assistance in this.

Yours Sincerely



Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer

CIRCULATION LIST

cc Executive Medical Director/Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)

Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency

Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency

Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Health and Social Care Board (*for onward distribution to Community Pharmacies*)

Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts

Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB

Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health and Social Care Board (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)

Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)

Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)

Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts

RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)

Medicines Management Pharmacists, HSC Board (*for cascade to prescribing advisers*)

Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust

Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service, Northern HSC Trust

Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery QUB

Professor Sonja McIlfratrick, Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster
Caroline Lee, CEC
Donna Gallagher, Open University
Professor Paul McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, UU
Professor Carmel Hughes, Head of School, School of Pharmacy, QUB
Professor Colin Adair, Director of the NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development, QUB
Joe Brogan, Assistant Director of Integrated Care, HSCB

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>