

WMcC/HP

5 July 2001

To:

Directors of Public Health

Dear

I am writing to you, as agreed at our recent meeting, with further details regarding the unfortunate death of a young girl at Altnagelvin Hospital. It appears that the use of hypotonic saline is still common practice in a number of paediatric units although there has been information around for a few years suggesting this does present risks to a very small number of children in the acute perioperative period. I have enclosed some articles which you might find of benefit in relation to this.

I know from discussions about this issue with Dr Raymond Fulton, Medical Director at Altnagelvin Hospital, that some paediatric settings within Northern Ireland have made appropriate changes but that in others, while the information may be known by anaesthetic staff, there has not necessarily been discussion regarding change between anaesthetists, surgeons and paediatricians.

I felt it might be helpful to draw this issue to your attention in order that each of us can check with those paediatric settings in our respective Boards to see whether modification in practice may be needed. I hope that the articles are helpful to you. If further more specific information is required I am sure that Dr Fulton would be happy to discuss this with anyone who contacted him.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Dr W W M McConnell
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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