

Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

Chief Executive
William McKee, CBE BSc (Hons) MBA

Chairman
Mr Pat McCartan

17 July 2008

Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer
DHSSPS
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ

MM/0445/2008

RECEIVED

22 JUL 2008

CMO'S OFFICE

Dear *Michael*

**REDUCING THE RISK OF HYPONATRAEMIA WHEN ADMINISTERING IV
FLUIDS TO CHILDREN**

The Belfast HSCT has expended considerable time and energy trying to develop a policy which will fulfil the requirements of:-

- NPSA Alert 22 - Reducing the risk of hyponatraemia when administering intravenous infusions to children
- Regional Paediatric Fluid Therapy Working Group Wallchart

Compliance with most of the requirements has been met, except where they apply to adolescents being cared for in adult wards. Patients who are in the transitional zone between being a child and an adult will always provide a problem for those planning healthcare provision. There isn't a simple age, weight, height rule that we can apply. Even the upper range of 16 years does not always delineate children from adults. This issue was highlighted in my letter of 2 May.

The dilemma, which has been pointed out forcibly by adult clinicians, is that we are asking them to apply two different treatment regimes (1 paediatric; 1 adult) in the one clinical area. This opens up the possibility of confusion which increases the risk to the patient.

We have debated this issue at length with those clinicians involved and believe this whole complex area needs further work carried out to bring clarity. We would ask you to consider working towards a single regional policy document which provides good practice guidance for fluid management of all ages. We might suggest that such a policy could outline two approaches to fluid management, primarily determined by weight:

1. Below 13 years and / or under 40 kg. Follow paediatric guidance
2. Above 13 years and above 40 kgs.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, The Roe Centre, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road,
Belfast BT8 8BH Tel: 028 9096 0000 Fax: 028 9096 0099 www.belfasttrust.hscni.net

We believe the policy for the first section is complete and that work could be carried out regionally to build on the paediatric work and develop an integrated policy which covers all ages. Such a policy would address the needs of adolescents and detail any factors, other than weight, which may influence the approach taken.

With regards to developing competency, it is felt that the provision of BMJ e-learning as the main training mode in the management of this problem will not be backed up by the necessary experience due to the limited number of paediatric cases in many adult areas. In addition, the e-learning module is not a sustainable approach for future staff as it we understand it will be no longer available. In these circumstances it would be more appropriate to have a single fluid management policy which raises awareness of hyponatraemia and provides an avenue for accessing the appropriate support from paediatric colleagues. We could then develop a local training module, tailored to our needs.

I hope you will consider these comments helpful. We would be happy to discuss these further.

Yours sincerely



DR A B STEVENS
MEDICAL DIRECTOR