

Media Statement



Tuesday, November 26, 2019

NHS GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE STATEMENT

Following recent events, we would like to reiterate how sorry we are to the families who may have been caused additional pain and distress and we'd again like to share our condolences to those who have suffered the tragedy of losing a child.

Today's independent report from Health Protection Scotland is welcome and demonstrates the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital/Royal Hospital for Children is safe.

The report provides reassurance for the many families and the public who will have had concerns about the safety of the unit.

From the Health Protection Scotland review of the data on test results of blood samples over the past six years, their report finds:

- One occasion when the number of infections linked to environmental organisms was greater than expected for this group of patients (Table 5). The period in question was June 2018 which was already being investigated by the infection control team and was identified as being potentially linked to the water supply.
- At no other time between 2013 and 2019 did the rate of infections linked to environmental organisms exceed the upper range of expected levels. This includes 2016 and 2017.
- An increase in Gram negative infections (including both environmental and enteric, i.e. intestinal infections) was noted in 2017 however this remained within expected levels for the unit. During this time there was an investigation into the possibility that two of these cases may have been linked which was later confirmed not to be the case. This investigation was reported to HPS as per mandatory guidance.
- Since the move to Ward 6A and 4B in September 2018, infection rates have been similar to other Scottish paediatric units.
- For a particular group of infections, known as gram positive infections, the rates have fallen and are now lower than elsewhere in Scotland.
- No single source of 'exposure' of infections has been identified across the six year period.

The purpose of the Health Protection Scotland report was to independently assess rates of infection in the haemato-oncology unit of the RHC over a number of years to help inform NHSGGC investigations into recent infections at the hospital and potential links between these infections and the ward.

The report considered six years of laboratory data during which period the unit has seen more than a thousand patients with 2,894 admissions.

The report's findings are fully in keeping with our own Incident Management Team investigations that concluded the unit is safe.

We have fully tested the water supply and ward surfaces in Ward 6A and also reviewed individual infections and found no links between individual infections and no source of infections in the ward.

On the basis of the IMT investigation's findings and the results from the Health Protection Scotland review, the ward re-opened to new patient admissions on Thursday.

Jane Grant, Chief Executive, said: "We completely understand this has been a distressing time for families and staff and we sympathise with them given the anxiety this has caused.

"Unfortunately there will always be a small number of patients who develop infections because of the seriousness of their illness and we are fully committed to supporting them and their families when this occurs.

"Families should be reassured that Infection rates at present are within expected levels and the hospital is safe.

"We continue to support families affected at this time and we welcome the opportunity to work with parents and Professor Craig White, who has been appointed by the Cabinet Secretary for Health, to improve our performance in this area.

"We are all fully committed to ensuring that questions are answered fully and parents reassured."

Ends.

Background

It is important to note that patients in the haemato-oncology unit are susceptible to getting infections because of their illness and also because of their treatment. Certain cancer treatments suppress the immune system and ability to fight off bacteria that can come from within your own system, or from external factors.

The key in managing infections is to identify unusual patterns that trigger grounds for investigations and ensure appropriate robust measures are in place.

ENDS

For further information either telephone **0141 201 4429** or email press.office@ggc.scot.nhs.uk