



To: General Practitioners
Accident and Emergency Departments
Chief Executives of NHS Trusts

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Copy: Consultants in Communicable Disease Control
National Travel Health Network and Centre
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal College of Physicians
Faculty of Public Health

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Dear Colleague

Polio outbreak in Tajikistan – advice for travellers and clinicians

I am writing to inform you about an ongoing polio outbreak in Tajikistan and to ask that you review the vaccination status of those intending to travel to the area and offer vaccination as appropriate. It is also important that you consider the possibility of polio in those travelling from Tajikistan and neighbouring countries that have symptoms of paralysis.

In April this year, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed cases of imported wild poliovirus in Tajikistan – the first to be reported in the WHO European region since it was declared polio-free in 2002. Since then the number of cases has increased substantially with more than 200 cases confirmed. Tajikistan shares a border with Afghanistan and the current outbreak is occurring in areas bordering Afghanistan. Wild poliovirus remains endemic in Afghanistan.

The government in Tajikistan, with support from WHO and other partners, has instigated three rounds of polio vaccination. Whilst this programme appears to have had a impact on the outbreak in the area, it is not yet under control and more cases are expected to be identified. Furthermore, there have now been reports of cases imported by the surrounding countries of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and a few cases to more distant locations in the Russian Federation. The conflict in Kyrgyzstan may make it more difficult to contain the spread of polio from the area.

The latest update (23 June 2010) on the situation from WHO is at:
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/poliomyelitis/publications/2010/who-epidemiological-brief-tajikistan-polio-outbreak-and-regional-response>

As the outbreak is likely to continue and there is now evidence of spread of cases from the area, I wanted to make you aware of this ongoing situation and provide the advice set out below.

