

Gateway ref: 17216

Chief Executives of Strategic Health Authorities  
Chief Executives of NHS Trusts  
Chief Executives of NHS Foundation Trusts  
Medical Directors of NHS Trusts  
Directors of Nursing  
Regional Directors of Public Health  
Chairs of Infection Control Committees  
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control  
Directors of Estates  
Directors of Facilities  
Monitor  
Care Quality Commission

Cc Independent Healthcare Advisory Services

6 February 2012

Dear Colleague

**Water Sources and Potential for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Infection from Taps and water systems – Updated Advice for augmented care units <sup>1</sup>**

**Chief Executives of NHS Trusts are asked to share this letter with Directors of Infection and Prevention Control, Lead clinicians, Estates and Facilities Managers and the person with responsibility for the safe operation of the water distribution systems within the Trust. If this is not the Responsible Person (Water) - as determined in HTM 04-01 Part B Chapter 6 paragraph 6.5 - please ensure that they are also made aware of this letter.**

The advice given by the Department of Health for England in the “Dear Colleague” letter of 27 August 2010 has been reviewed and will be updated to reflect emerging evidence relating to the control of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in water systems, recent advice from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) in respect of the recent outbreak in Northern Ireland and views of Advisory Committee on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI).

In the meantime, all healthcare providers and their infection prevention and control teams, in cooperation with estates & facilities departments and the Responsible Person (Water), are **reminded** of the need to carry out regular and thorough risk assessments to establish if water that may have direct or indirect patient contact (e.g. is used for hand washing,

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<sup>1</sup> For example high dependency, adult, paediatric & neonatal critical care, renal, transplant, haematology and burns units

patients' personal hygiene and cleaning or maintaining equipment that has patient contact) is contaminated with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and minimise any risks that are identified. Particular attention should be given to the water systems in augmented care units. You are also asked to have regard to the attached best practice relating to the use of hand wash stations, assessing and managing the risks.

Technical guidance will be available at end of March 2012 on:

- i) sampling, testing and monitoring aspects;
- ii) what action to take in event of a problem and
- iii) advice which can be drawn on to help inform local water safety action plans.

Local risk assessment processes should also provide an assurance that they are compliant with HTM 04-01 *The control of Legionella, hygiene, "safe" hot water, cold water and drinking water systems\** and that manufacturers' installation and maintenance instructions have been followed. An addendum to HTM 04-01 to cover *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is being developed and will be available by March 2013.

Healthcare providers who think that their taps or water systems may be contaminated with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* should seek specialist advice from their regional microbiologist, HPU and HPA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally C Davies', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER  
CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER**

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\* (<https://publications.spaceforhealth.nhs.uk/>)