
Standards for HIV clinical care

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 HOURS TUESDAY 20 MARCH 2007

NEW PATTERNS OF CARE NEEDED FOR HIV PATIENTS

A new report from four leading medical organisations calls for new patterns of care for patients with HIV. The report '**Standards for HIV Clinical Care**' by the British HIV Association (BHIVA), the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH), and the British Infection Society (BIS), builds on existing treatment guidelines by setting out recommendations for who should provide HIV care and how services should be organised.

Existing services are not currently matching the needs of all HIV patients, resulting in late, missed or mistaken diagnoses, and inappropriate treatment. The report states that HIV care should be delivered through managed clinical networks, each covering a defined geographical area and group of NHS organisations. Two distinct kinds of service are needed to match the varying needs of HIV patients:

- HIV units providing outpatient care for the majority of patients with uncomplicated HIV infection
- A single-site or virtual HIV centre in each network that provides services for patients with more specialised needs, including complex outpatient care, inpatient care and referral/advice services for the network as a whole

The report recommends that all appointments to consultant posts providing HIV care should be made in the context of managed clinical networks, and proposes standards for training and continuing professional development (CPD) for doctors caring for HIV patients.

Other recommendations cover how specialist HIV services should relate to primary care, the future development of health care records and information sharing, the patient pathway, implementation and audit.

Professor Margaret Johnson, Chair of the British HIV Association, said: "When NHS organisations are facing rapid change, it's vital to be clear about how different services should work together. These standards make sure people can receive routine HIV care locally and conveniently, but can also access more specialised care for complex problems. The thinking behind the report draws on models of care for other chronic diseases, while still reflecting key features that make HIV different.

One big change we want to see is much more widespread HIV testing to facilitate planned care, so that fewer people remain undiagnosed until they develop a major HIV-related illness."

Dr Mary Armitage, RCP Clinical Vice-President, said: "The Royal College of Physicians is delighted to host the launch of this report. Care of patients with HIV requires the expertise of a wide range of health care professionals, with expertise from many different specialists working together. The strength of the report is enhanced by the collaborative working that has underpinned its production. Patients and service providers will welcome the clarity regarding the provision of care."

Dr Simon Barton, President of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV, said: "The clinical picture of HIV infection has changed and we must adapt our services to meet the needs of patients. This means more integrated services including the provision of sexual health care to further reduce the risk of HIV transmission. BASHH is fully committed to implementing the development of networks of HIV care across the NHS."

Dr Nick Beeching, President of the British Infection Society, said: "This report provides a realistic framework for optimising medical care for HIV positive individuals wherever they live in Britain, and is particularly relevant for the large number of people receiving care outside London."

A full copy of the report is attached. For further information please contact RCP PR Manager Linda Cuthbertson on 020 7935 1174 extension 254, 0794 105 7494 or email Linda.Cuthbertson@rcplondon.ac.uk.

Notes to Editors

The report will be launched at the Royal College of Physicians on Tuesday 20 March at 10.30 am to an audience of stakeholders and HIV clinicians. This will not be a formal press conference but if you would like to attend please contact Linda Cuthbertson on the above numbers – please note numbers will be very limited so early notice would be appreciated.

Linda Cuthbertson
PR Manager
Royal College of Physicians
11 St Andrews Place
Regent's Park
London NW1 4LE

Tel: 020 7935 1174 ext. 254, 0794 105 7494