

21 July 2011

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To: NHS Acute Trust Chief Executives, Medical
Directors and Directors of Nursing
Cc: NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executives, Medical
Directors and Directors of Nursing

Gateway reference: 16370

Dear Colleague

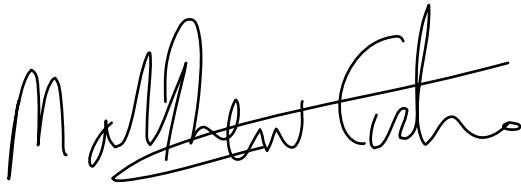
Subject: Management of blood-exposure in police officers

In the course of their professional duties, some police officers are exposed to the blood of others, e.g. through injury with contaminated needles, and thereby to the risk of contracting a blood-borne virus, such as HIV or hepatitis B or C. In such cases, it is important that a police officer receives assessment and any necessary initial post exposure prophylaxis treatment as quickly as possible after exposure. This letter clarifies existing policy on how this should take place.

Although, each police service has its own occupational health service, it will not usually provide 24 hour emergency cover or timely access across the whole area. Therefore NHS A&E departments are the appropriate location for police officers to have such injuries treated, have appropriate blood samples taken and to receive initial necessary post exposure prophylaxis, in the same way as other patients involved in blood exposure incidents are treated, in line with Department of Health or Health Protection Agency guidelines.¹ I have discussed this with the College of Emergency Medicine which has agreed to this principle.

Police forces and the NHS should make local arrangements to ensure that police officers are able to access the emergency care they need and appropriate procedures are in place for collection of any evidence when this is required. Follow up care should then take place according to local arrangements in place between the NHS and police occupational health services, which may vary according to local circumstances.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that your protocols are up to date and agreed with the local police service.



Professor Matthew Cooke
National Clinical Director for Urgent and Emergency Care

¹ HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis - Guidance from the UK Chief Medical Officers' Expert Advisory Group on AIDS
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_088185

Exposure to hepatitis B virus: guidance on post-exposure prophylaxis (Public Health Laboratory Service Hepatitis Subcommittee) www.hpa.org.uk/cdr/archives/CDRreview/1992/cdr0992.pdf
(see also Immunisation Against Infectious Disease - "The Green Book": Chapter 18 - Hepatitis B (Department of Health)
http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_108820.pdf)

Guidance on the investigation and management of occupational exposure to hepatitis C. (Ramsay, M E and Public Health Laboratory Service Advisory Committee on Blood Borne Viruses) www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947393443