

DEPARTMENT OF RADIOLOGY, DIAGNOSTIC & THERAPY DIVISION

Bristol Royal Infirmary
Marlborough Street
Bristol
BS2 HW

Dr H Andrews Secretary 0117 342 2672
Dr M Callaway Secretary 0117 342 2728
Dr P Davison Secretary 0117 342 2729
Dr J Hughes Secretary 0117 342 2672
Dr A Jones Secretary 0117 432 4181
Dr M Hamilton Secretary 0117 342 2729
Dr J Kabala Secretary 0117 342 3854

Dr P Murphy
Dr H Roach
Dr M Shehab
Dr J Virjee
Dr C Wakeley
Dr P Wilde

Fax No 0117 928 3267
Secretary 0117 342 4181
Secretary 0117 342 2728
Secretary 0117 342 2729
Secretary 0117 342 4181
Secretary 0117 342 3854
Secretary 0117 342 2672

e-mail: huw.roach@UHBristol.nhs.uk Secretary: kay.angell@UHBristol.nhs.uk

28th August 2009

Dear Colleague

As you may be aware, there has been a Rapid Response Report from the National Patient Safety Association (NPSA) concerning the use of bowel cleansing preparations (NPSA/2009/RRR012).

This states that:-

- RRR012/1. A clinical assessment is undertaken by the clinician authorising the surgery or investigative procedure (including GPs using the direct access route) to ensure that there is no contraindication (e.g. clinical condition such as diverticulitis) or risks (e.g. concurrent medication such as diuretics) from the use of a bowel cleansing solution.
- RRR012/2. Use of a bowel cleansing solution is authorised by the clinician at the same time as the surgery or investigative procedure. This may be done by using the same form.
- RRR012/3. The clinician requesting the surgery or procedure and authorising the use of a bowel cleansing solution is responsible for ensuring that an explanation on the safe use of the product is provided to the patient or carer.
- RRR012/4. A safe system exists that involves an authorised clinical professional in the supply of the medicine and written information (including named contact) for each patient. See implementation checklist in supporting information for more details on this.

(Full details can be found at www.npsa.nhs.uk/rrr/)

In the Radiology department, these regulations will apply to barium enema examinations, CT colonography and some other GI contrast examinations.

Currently, all patients are no doubt clinically assessed before any examination request is made and caution exercised in those at high risk (eg the elderly, frail/immobile patients, patients with pre-existing renal or cardiac impairment, those on diuretics and/or ACE inhibitors, those with liver disease etc). What the



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report now makes clear however, is that **the suitability and safety of patients taking bowel cleansing agents lies with the referring clinician.**

We are introducing a safe system of dispensing bowel cleansing agents, with designated patient contacts. This will be fairly similar to the current system. However, we will have to amend our request forms so that the referring clinician can document that patients are considered able to take these agents safely. If other request forms are used, it would be very helpful if this could be indicated with the clinical details.

We hope that these minor changes will ensure patient safety as specified by the NPSA, whilst not detrimentally affecting the current systems for organising and performing these examinations in University Hospitals Bristol.

Please do not hesitate to contact us via e-mail (Huw.Roach@UH Bristol.nhs.uk) or telephone (0117 342 2621) if you have any queries or suggestions regarding these issues, or wish to discuss an individual patient.

Yours faithfully,

Huw Roach
Consultant Radiologist
(on behalf of the Radiology Department, University Hospitals Bristol)

