Department of Health & Social Care

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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A letter to the profession from the UK Chief Medical Officers on Influenza season 2026/27: implications for clinical practice

Dear colleagues,

Now that children have returned to school after half term, it is likely that influenza rates will start to rise. It is therefore important to implement measures now, especially promoting vaccination given the delay between date of vaccine and effective immunity, to protect patients, staff and services.

Winter is always a challenging time for the NHS and social care services. As UK CMOs, we encourage clinicians to continue to promote and deliver influenza vaccination for eligible patients as soon as possible. Healthcare workers have a professional responsibility to protect their patients from infectious diseases and we urge them to take up vaccination to protect themselves, those they care for and their colleagues.

Clinicians are also reminded that early antiviral treatment can reduce the risk of complications and improve clinical outcomes. The UKHSA *Guidance on the use of antiviral agents for the treatment and prophylaxis of seasonal influenza* (link) has been updated for 26/27. Health professionals should familiarise themselves with the key updates outlining the current recommended approach to the prescribing and use of oseltamivir, including critically ill patients. The guidance summarises the key evidence to inform clinical decision making, including the preliminary findings from the REMAP- CAP study.

As you may be aware, the RECOVERY trial, led by the University of Oxford, is currently evaluating oseltamivir and should provide important evidence on its utility in people hospitalised with pneumonia. This will be a valuable contribution to the evidence base, and we encourage all practising clinicians to enrol patients into relevant clinical trials when appropriate.

Many thanks in advance for taking this forward over winter, your commitment to ensuring these actions are communicated and effectively integrated into practice is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

The Chief Medical Officers of the United Kingdom

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