

Review Article

# Meningococcal Disease in Northern Ireland - Past, Present & Future

## MeningoNI Forum

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### ABSTRACT

Meningococcal disease has had devastating consequences in Northern Ireland since its first description locally in 1859. The incidence of this disease has significantly declined in recent years, however it is important to understand reasons for this changing epidemiology and to acknowledge the diagnostic and clinical management developments that have been made locally. This review aims to examine the changing face of this disease in Northern Ireland over the years, with particular reference to local disease prevention, epidemiology, diagnosis, clinical treatment and management, post-disease sequelae and the role of meningitis charities locally, in terms of patient support and research.

### BACKGROUND

In 2014, a forum named “*MeningoNI*” was established to bring together stakeholders with a professional interest in meningococcal disease in Northern Ireland. *MeningoNI* offers a forum for education and discussion of matters with a broad interest in meningococcal disease, allowing key local stakeholders, the opportunity to consider recently evolving meningococcal disease in the context of detection and characterisation, microbial pathogenesis, epidemiology, disease prevention and vaccinology. Specific objectives of the Forum are:-

- To create a local (NI) Forum and meeting place for key stakeholders to consider evolving issues in meningococcal disease,
- To independently consider existing and emerging scientific evidence relating to disease management,
- To consider the advice of expert National Committees in a devolved NI context,
- To consider the jurisdictional aspects of meningococcal disease detection and management on the Island of Ireland, given that NI is the only region of the UK to share a land border with another EU member State (Republic of Ireland),
- To issue independent advice/guidance as an expert forum on the strategic development of health systems in NI relating to

meningococcal disease management/prevention, including charting a roadmap for optimum patient outcome in NI,

- To examine policy relating to meningococcal disease control, including meningococcal disease, between NI/within the devolved nations of the UK, as well as with our neighbouring EU member State and to explore models of synergy and collaboration with these nations, to minimise the burden of meningococcal disease for all.

The Forum has met on numerous occasions and has involved key speakers from within and outside NI, including Professor Andrew Pollard, Chair, UK Joint Committee on Vaccination & Immunisation (JCVI), Professor Karina Butler, Chair, National Immunisation Advisory Committee, Dublin, as well as local MLAs, Stormont Health Committee, NI MPs and Dr Michael McBride, NI Chief Medical Officer.

This review represents one output from this Forum and the authors trust that this will add value to those readers with an interest in meningococcal disease, locally, nationally and internationally. All authors are members of the Northern Ireland Meningococcal Stakeholders’ Forum (MeningoNI).

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