PRESS RELEASE

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HPRA Recommends Maintenance Checks on Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Devices

Sports and community clubs urged to perform safety checks on AEDs during the winter months

First aiders and users of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at sports and community clubs have today been reminded by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to perform regular servicing and maintenance as per the user manual supplied with the AED.

Users are also reminded that where you store your AED is critical to its performance, particularly during winter months. The HPRA reminds users that changes in weather particularly temperature and humidity changes or poor storage could result in device malfunction. AEDs provide potentially lifesaving first aid treatment to cardiac arrest victims prior to the arrival of the emergency services. However, if such a device is not maintained adequately it may not perform effectively in an emergency situation. In recent years, the HPRA has received reports of performance issues associated with AEDs. After reviewing these incidents, it is the view of the HPRA that these issues may be avoided in the future through good maintenance, regular servicing and enhanced user knowledge. The HPRA has produced a user-friendly guide to maintenance which is available to download from the website.

It is estimated that there are up to 5,000 sudden cardiac deaths in Ireland each year. A significant percentage of these deaths are due to incidents of cardiac arrest that take place outside of the hospital environment. These medical devices play an important role in potentially reducing the time response when sudden cardiac arrests occur out of hospital and can be lifesaving in some circumstances. There has been a noticeable and welcome increase in the number of defibrillators nationwide in sporting venues, schools and shopping centres coinciding with the development of smaller, easier to use, portable devices. The HPRA AED leaflet highlights important information to consider before purchasing a defibrillator as well as advice on storing the device correctly and keeping it updated and serviced. Some of the key recommendations include:

- Checking for a CE Mark – All medical devices including AEDs must carry a CE mark which ensures that when used and stored properly, the device should work as intended and be safe.
- Correctly storing the AED – This is critical for optimum performances as both the AED and accessories, such as the battery and pads, can be badly affected by the weather and environmental conditions.
- Training – All users of AED should complete a recognised training course and the details of trained users should be displayed near the defibrillator so that all staff and facility members are aware of who can use the device in an emergency.
- Regular servicing and maintenance – This is essential and must be carried out in accordance with the guidance given by the manufacturer.

According to Anne Tobin, Medical Devices Vigilance Manager, HPRA, “As we enter the winter months it is critical that AEDs are stored appropriately. These are potentially lifesaving medical devices but they may not perform effectively in an emergency situation if they are not correctly maintained. The user manual supplied with a AED will provide detailed information from the manufacturer about its use and maintenance while our leaflet highlights key issues around the purchase, care and use of AEDs.”

The Automated External Defibrillator leaflet is available for download from www.hpra.ie. Printed copies can also be requested by emailing leaflets@hpra.ie.

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ABOUT THE HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATORY AUTHORITY:
The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) protects and enhances public health and animal health by regulating medicines, medical devices and other health products. The products under its remit include human and veterinary medicines, medical devices, blood and blood components, tissues and cells, organs for transplantation and cosmetics. Formerly known as the Irish Medicines Board (IMB), it became the Health Products Regulatory Authority on 1 July 2014.