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Dear Mr Birkett,

Thank you for your recent correspondence to Jeremy Hunt about air quality in hospitals. I have been asked to reply.

The Department's document, 'Health Technical Memorandum (HTM) 03-01: Specialised ventilation for healthcare premises' sets out guidance for standards with respect to ventilation strategy in healthcare premises. The hospital or healthcare facility selects the primary and secondary filtration dependent upon the air quality of the local environment and upon the requirements of the clinical area or space to ensure the safety of patients and staff. HTM 03-01 (paragraph 132) acknowledges that in areas of higher atmospheric pollution, higher standards of filtration may be required.

I note your suggestion that high efficiency particle air filtration should be utilised more widely within healthcare buildings. Generally, apart from specialist areas, existing hospital buildings are not constructed to air tightness levels that would benefit from this approach. In addition, the majority of healthcare premises, including those located in inner city areas, employ natural ventilation as part of the ventilation strategy for the building in conjunction with the necessary mechanical ventilation systems.

'HTM 03-01: Specialised ventilation for healthcare premises' was published in November 2007 and developed just prior to the adoption of BS EN 13779:2007. HTM 03-01 will be updated to reflect current research and standards when it is reviewed. In light of the concerns raised in your correspondence, the Department will consider adding HTM 03-01 to the list of prioritised guidance due to be considered for review within this financial year.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the Department's attention.

Yours sincerely,

Eamonn Maloney

Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries
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