

NICE – A brief overview

History¹

NICE was established as a Special Health Authority following a review of health policy which identified the need for a central point of reference on effective clinical practice

NICE Guidance

NICE guidance helps health and social care professionals deliver the best possible care based on the best available evidence.

NICE makes recommendations in the form of guidance which all NHS organisations are expected to take into account in delivering care. With the exception of technology appraisals (see below) the recommendations are advisory, not mandatory.

1. **Clinical Guidelines** are recommendations on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales. Clinical guidelines are based on the best available evidence. Guidelines help healthcare professionals in their work, but they do not replace their knowledge and skills.
2. **Technology appraisals** are recommendations on the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales, such as:
 - medicines
 - medical devices (for example, hearing aids or inhalers)
 - diagnostic techniques (tests used to identify diseases)
 - surgical procedures (for example, repairing hernias)
 - health promotion activities (for example, ways of helping people with diabetes manage their condition).

Unlike other NICE guidance which is advisory, technology appraisals are mandatory and must be followed.

3. **Medical technologies guidance** is designed to help the NHS adopt efficient and cost effective medical devices and diagnostics more rapidly and consistently. The types of products which might be included are medical devices that deliver treatment such as those implanted during surgical procedures, technologies that give greater independence to patients, and diagnostic devices or tests used to detect or monitor medical conditions.
4. **Interventional procedures.** NICE makes recommendations about whether interventional procedures used for diagnosis or treatment are safe enough and work well enough for routine use. An interventional procedure is a procedure used for diagnosis or treatment that involves one of the following:

¹ The content for this briefing is taken from the NICE website: www.nice.org.uk [Accessed 3/7/12]

- Making a cut or a hole to gain access to the inside of a patient's body - for example, when carrying out an operation or inserting a tube into a blood vessel.
 - Gaining access to a body cavity (such as the digestive system, lungs, womb or bladder) without cutting into the body - for example, examining or carrying out treatment on the inside of the stomach using an instrument inserted via the mouth.
 - Using electromagnetic radiation (which includes X-rays, lasers, gamma-rays and ultraviolet light) - for example, using a laser to treat eye problems.
5. **Public health guidance** makes recommendations for populations and individuals on activities, policies and strategies that can help prevent disease or improve health. The guidance may focus on a particular topic (such as smoking), a particular population (such as schoolchildren) or a particular setting (such as the workplace).
6. **NICE Quality Standards** are a set of specific, concise statements and associated measures. They set out aspirational, but achievable, markers of high-quality, cost-effective patient care, covering the treatment and prevention of different diseases and conditions.
- Derived from the best available evidence such as NICE guidance and other evidence sources accredited by NHS Evidence, they are developed independently by NICE, in collaboration with NHS and social care professionals, their partners and service users, and address three dimensions of quality: clinical effectiveness, patient safety and patient experience.
 - Quality standards will be reflected in the new Commissioning Outcomes Framework and will inform payment mechanisms and incentive schemes such as the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) and Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) Payment Framework.

How NICE works

NICE is internationally recognised for the way in which it develop its recommendations, a rigorous process that is centred on using the best available evidence and includes the views of experts, patients and carers, and industry.

NICE does not decide on the topics for its guidance and appraisals. Instead, topics are referred by the Department of Health. Topics are selected on the basis of a number of factors, including the burden of disease, the impact on resources, and whether there is inappropriate variation in practice across the country. Guidance is then created by independent and unbiased advisory committees.

NICE has an “open and transparent consultation process”² throughout the development of our guidance and quality standards which allows individuals, patient groups, charities and industry to comment on our recommendations.

² The content for this briefing is taken from the NICE website: www.nice.org.uk [Accessed 3/7/12]
 J:\PandD\Projects_Current\Evidence guidance\NICE\CSP model & processes\master templates
 2012\Draft templates for Alliances PN / Alliance NICE briefing 3/7/12 / RH