

NICE international: an overview

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A message from the CEO

The service that NICE offers is unique because it draws on the Institute's rich experience of doing the job. We know what it takes to source and then convert evidence into health policy and then use that policy to change practice and improve outcomes for patients. Based upon rigorous scientific methodology, what makes NICE special is our relationship with the biggest national health system in the developed world. Our processes and methods have been tried and tested over the years and the extensive international interest in what we do and how we do it shows that it is our experience of making things happen, building on best available evidence and engaging with multiple stakeholders, that is most highly valued by foreign health policy-makers. We are results-oriented, committed to evaluating our performance and to delivering high quality products within tight timelines.

Andrew Dillon

1 About NICE

The UK National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.

With an annual budget of approximately £35 million, NICE employs 250 staff in its offices in London and Manchester. Throughout the year, up to 2,000 experts are engaged in developing NICE products via its academic, professional and public involvement networks across the UK.

An integral part of the National Health Service (NHS), the world's largest health service, NICE has been setting evidence-based best practice standards for health professionals since its establishment by the UK government in 1999. NICE provides authoritative recommendations on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of medical technologies and management strategies to improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities and ensure that patients get the best outcomes and the NHS gets value for money. We make sure that this information reaches the wider public, the NHS and patients and we provide co-ordinated support for those frontline professionals responsible for implementing our guidance. By using effective and cost-effective clinical and public health interventions, the health of the population can be improved and equal, affordable access to healthcare can be achieved and maintained.

NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:

- *public health* - guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health, for those working in the NHS, local authorities and the wider public and voluntary sector in England and Wales
- *health technologies* - guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and surgical and diagnostic procedures within the NHS
- *clinical practice* - guidance on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS.

NICE guidance is developed using the expertise of the NHS and the wider healthcare community including healthcare professionals, patients and carers, industry experts and the academic world. Its reputation is built on the following principles:

- *Independence:* guidance developed by independent advisory committees
- *Transparency:* methods, processes and evidence placed in the public domain
- *Inclusiveness:* public participation in advisory committees and through open consultation

- *Consistency*: the same principles applied within and across all NICE programmes
- *Scientific rigour*: evidence-based methods and independent academic review
- *Timeliness*: providing guidance when it is most needed

1.1 Our day-to-day business

- *Centre for Health Technology Evaluation*: The UK was one of the first European countries to establish formal requirements for clinical and economic evaluation of new technologies with NICE, in 1999. Since then, NICE has reviewed over 400 new (and existing) technologies to ensure optimal therapeutic benefit for patient and best value for the NHS. NICE also acts in a quasi-licensing capacity to assess the efficacy and safety of all new diagnostic or therapeutic procedures introduced in the NHS. It has also reviewed over 250 interventional procedures to establish their safety and efficacy.
- *Centre for Clinical Practice*: NICE clinical guidelines set out evidence-based quality standards that incorporate equity and efficiency considerations and span whole disease areas and care pathways. NICE has issued over 60 guidelines laying out clinical and cost-effective recommendations for the management of acute illness and chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension and mental health problems.
- *Centre for Public Health Excellence*: NICE has, over the last 2 years, developed public health guidance on topics ranging from giving-up smoking and increasing physical activity, to preventing sexually transmitted diseases and improving immunisation rates. Here too, evidence of effectiveness, value and of reducing inequalities forms the basis of our recommendations.
- *Selecting priority topics for guidance development*: NICE has developed a sophisticated process for selecting high priority topics to develop guidance, based on factors such as the degree of clinical need, inappropriate variation and potential for significant health and/or efficiency gains.
- *Safe practice and reducing waste*: NICE recently launched a pilot project on developing cost effective evidence-based guidance on improving patient safety and a new stream of work on identifying and targeting ineffective wasteful practice across the service.
- *Supporting implementation and assessing our impact*: NICE has developed a wide portfolio of interactive material and a network of experts on the ground to support the uptake of its guidance. Online databases of evidence of uptake, educational slides for each guidance product, budgetary impact analyses tailored to the needs of local purchasers of services, guides to help evidence-based clinical service re-design in specific disease areas such surgical

management of obesity or foot care for diabetics, are a few examples of such implementation support tools.

- *Research and Development:* NICE's Research and Development team is working with the academic community and research funders to develop innovative models to support research driven by decision-makers' questions: the option of using a technology only in the context of research until more evidence of its benefit becomes available (conditional coverage) is one such model as are risk sharing schemes based on drug performance. Furthermore, R&D is driving research to help improve the methods and processes of producing NICE guidance.
- *Consumer involvement:* NICE has a dedicated Patient and Public Involvement Programme to provide information, support and training to patients, carers and members of the public with an interest in the development or implementation of NICE guidance. Furthermore, NICE makes all of its clinical guidance available in formats specifically written for patients, carers and the public.
- *Eliciting consumers' values in healthcare prioritisation and resource allocation:* NICE has been one of the first national agencies openly to consider the moral and ethical consequences of priority setting in healthcare. NICE is internationally renowned for incorporating not only clinical and cost-effectiveness but also equity and distributive fairness considerations in both its actual decisions and the processes it applies for reaching these. The NICE Citizens' Council, a 'citizens' jury' approach to eliciting public values, and its formal guidelines on Social Value Judgements, are important examples of NICE's activities in this field.
- *Engaging with the press - NICE public relations strategy:* NICE has a dedicated Communications' Directorate to publicise its guidance, liaise with national and international press, handle public enquiries and commission public opinion surveys. Our Communications team is instrumental in the dissemination of the NICE message to the UK public.

Over the last 8 years, our guidance and services, our methods and processes have established NICE as a global model for evidence-based policy-making in healthcare.

Our website receives over 350,000 unique visitors each month, from around the world. Visit us at: www.nice.org.uk

2 Our international audience

2.1 *High-income economies*

Ageing populations, increasing prevalence of chronic disease, rising public expectations and the continual introduction of new expensive medical technologies, place enormous pressures on the healthcare budgets of high-income countries. In an effort to improve efficiency without compromising quality, a number of countries have now established formal requirements for considering evidence of cost-effectiveness when making coverage and reimbursement decisions. Examples include Australia and New Zealand, the Canadian provinces, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Others, such as Taiwan, Turkey and the Republic of Korea are either seriously considering establishing such decision-making frameworks or already in the process of doing so.

What we can offer:

- ***Technical and strategic advice*** to expand or enhance the performance of established entities developing evidence-based guidance and/or making reimbursement decisions
- ***Independent evaluation*** of existing national or local models of health technology assessment or evidence-based guideline development
- ***Hands-on support*** with setting up and running new entities to develop evidence-based reimbursement or best practice guidance taking into account the country-specific context

Healthcare budgets are finite, irrespective of a country's GDP and require rational and evidence-informed investment decisions. Good quality economic evaluation based on methodologically robust principles, coupled with reliable procedural frameworks that encourage transparent and consultative decision-making, is a prerequisite for successful national healthcare policies.

Drawing on our hands-on involvement in policy making in the British NHS, our extensive academic network and our international experience, we can help develop new or improve existing models of evidence-based policy making in healthcare.

2.2 *Middle and lower income economies*

Middle-income countries spend an increasingly high fraction of their health budgets on pharmaceuticals, proportionately more than richer economies; the pressure to adopt new expensive treatments may intensify as high-income countries are becoming more successful in implementing cost-containment

strategies for pharmaceuticals. Challenges such as chronic disease, inequity in access and health outcomes, wide unexplained variation in quality and lack of professional best practice standards are also present in middle-income countries.

The need for international support with the development and management of health systems in developing countries was highlighted in the 2007 UK Global Health Partnerships report: “Organisations like the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)... working in technology assessment and public health, are particularly in demand for advice and help and to share experiences and knowledge.”¹

While the needs of middle-income countries, with fast growing middle classes with increasing purchasing power, are distinct from those of lower and lower-middle income economies, there are many common factors. NICE will work with central or federal governments and governmental agencies to tailor its services to the specific context and needs of individual countries.

What we can offer:

- **Improving quality and consistency of care delivery:** through helping develop new and adapting existing NICE guidelines for best practice, and through our implementation support systems
- **Achieving best value:** NICE methods and processes, adapted to the local setting, can help build the necessary infrastructure to inform national purchasing decisions and the design of core medicines lists.
- **Developing evidence-based cost-effective advice on disease prevention and health promotion:** both the methods and processes NICE follows to develop such guidance but also the final guidance products, appropriately adapted to the local, settings can add value at the national and local levels. Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, tackling substance abuse and immunisation programmes are some of the areas in which NICE develops public health guidance.
- **Tackling health inequalities:** Equitable access to care is central to NICE guidance development processes. NICE experience can help build generic processes for targeting disadvantaged populations. Current NICE guidance on improving access to services in disadvantaged urban areas aiming to increase statin use and uptake of smoking cessation hence reducing premature death from cardiovascular disease and lung cancer are examples that can be applied beyond the UK setting.
- **Building active public engagement mechanisms and gaining public support:** NICE can draw on its expertise in engaging with patients and the

¹ Lord Crisp, Global Health Partnerships, (2007)

public to develop processes for meaningful public consultation in support of health policy decisions

- ***Developing and evaluating models of introducing health system innovations:*** Evaluation and impact assessment is a core component of NICE's function in the NHS. In conjunction with country-specific and international academic partners, NICE will help develop and evaluate models for introducing health system reform, such as value-based coverage policies for medical technologies, public engagement strategies and behaviour-changing interventions.
- ***Fighting chronic disease:*** chronic disease is a major health problem in the developing world. NICE has developed evidence-based guidance on the prevention and treatment of global health challenges such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes and mental disease.

Challenges such as affordability of medications, chronic disease management and reducing inappropriate variation are not unique to rich countries. NICE methods, processes and final products, appropriately adapted to each country's context, can make a significant contribution to evidence-based policy making in middle- and lower-income economies.

3 Our international experience

NICE is considered a world leader in developing evidence-based guidance on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of clinical and public health interventions and services. An increasing number of countries have established, or are in the process of establishing, similar approaches to setting quality standards and/or making reimbursement decisions. As a result, NICE has, over the years, both contributed to and drawn on international research and practice in evidence-based health policy.

3.1 *Participation in international networks and global initiatives*

Evidence-based guidelines for clinical and public health practice: We are involved in several international projects and initiatives, including a European project for the [Coordination of Cancer Clinical Practice Guidelines](#) and relevant research and the [Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation](#) (GRADE) Working Group. We are an active member of the [Guidelines International Network](#) and a founding member of the [Appraisal of Guidelines Research and Evaluation](#) (AGREE) initiative for guideline quality assessment. We are also involved in international initiatives for cross-agency and cross-country [guideline adaptation](#) (ADAPTE). We have established links with other guidelines' organisations in Europe and have regular exchanges with similar agencies in North America.

The NICE Centre for Public Health Excellence, in collaboration with the University of Development in Chile, is the organisational hub for the [Knowledge Network](#) of the WHO [Commission on Social Determinants of Health](#) (*chair*: Sir Michael Marmot). The purpose of the Commission is to strengthen health equity through policy and institutional change to address social determinants of health.

Health technology Assessment: NICE is a member and active supporter of [HTA International](#) and of the [European Network of HTA](#) (EUnetHTA), an initiative funded by the EU Commission, both important international initiatives to help improve and coordinate national and regional HTA activities to inform policy-making.

3.2 *Selected case studies*

NICE has received delegations from and its employees have visited and shared experiences with fellow policy-makers and academics from over 60 countries, including Japan, Canada, the United States, China, Greece, South Africa, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Thailand, Germany, South Korea, Australia,

Mexico, Turkey and Sweden. Below we describe three case studies of NICE interactions with international agencies or governments.

Case study 1: Supporting the development of evidence-based practice in developing countries – South Africa

Under a memorandum of understanding with the South African Department of Health, NICE contributed to a Ministerial workshop in South Africa in 2006 on quality and service delivery in public hospitals. The event initiated an ongoing collaboration aimed at adapting NICE methodologies for developing clinical guidelines in South Africa and at building a process for economic evaluation of medical technologies compatible with South African drug licensing and pricing arrangements.

Case study 2: Evaluating established HTA agencies - Canada

NICE was invited by the Canadian Government to undertake a review of the technical quality of the work of the Coordinating Office for Health Technology Assessment in 2004. The work involved reviewing a number of assessments undertaken by the Agency and commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of its methods and processes.

Case study 3: Bosnia

In 2002, NICE partnered with a UK consultancy funded by the World Bank on a project to support the reconstruction of the health system in Bosnia. The project focussed on accreditation of service providers and NICE provided technical advice on methods and processes for developing evidence-based clinical guidelines.

3.3 Building partnerships

NICE-initiated partnerships

NICE can draw on its extensive national (UK) and international network of experts from the academic, policy and science-based consulting worlds to offer a package of services tailored to a country's specific requirements. Developing synergies through collaboration between NICE and experts in fields such as macro-system reform, health financing, design and implementation of essential drugs' lists in developing countries or large scale comparative research and evaluation of policy interventions, will ensure the NICE model adapted to each specific local setting.

NICE services as a contribution to larger-scale projects

NICE can provide specific services as required on an 'add-on' basis to complement larger scale projects led by third parties, including academic entities or international consulting groups. NICE specific expertise can enhance the relevance and value of the overall package of services offered to the customer country.

4 Our services: an overview

Our services fall into four broad categories:

- *Strategy*: strategy advice on setting up and improving evidence-based policy-making public entities
- *Methodology*: technical advice on the methodology of critical appraisal and technology assessment to inform decision-making
- *Process*: input on processes and decision-making frameworks with a focus on transparency, stakeholder involvement, public engagement and consultation
- *Research and evaluation*: evaluation of the effectiveness of health system innovation

4.1 Areas of expertise

- *Health technology assessment*: informing reimbursement decisions of new and existing technologies based on evidence of value to the end users
- *Clinical and public health guidelines*: setting cost-effective quality standards, reducing variation in practice and preventing ill health
- *Safety and efficacy of therapeutic and diagnostic interventions*
- *Implementation support*: behaviour change and stakeholder buy-in; guidance budgetary impact and uptake assessments
- *Topic selection for guidance development*
- *Patient and public engagement in decision-making and elicitation of societal values*

4.2 Modes of support

- One-to-one meetings with senior management, technical and project leads
- Independent reviews of existing agencies
- Technical training courses
- Hands-on training through electives at NICE
- On-site support to set up methods and processes for evidence-based decision-making
- Interpretation and adaptation of methodology, processes, evidence base and final NICE guidance products to individual country settings
- Facilitation of outsourcing of evidence reviews for guidelines and technology assessments where capacity constraints exist at a country level

NICE can help build capacity and improve performance of government entities within the individual country context through provision of services tailored to partner country's needs and with a strong focus on deliverables, performance management and evaluation.

How to contact us;

Initial contact with NICE regarding its services can be made through:

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