



The Royal College of Ophthalmologists' response to the NICE consultation on Principles that guide the development of NICE guidance and standards

February 19

Introduction

The RCOphth is the professional body for ophthalmologists and trainees in the UK. We work with clinical leaders to ensure quality of patient care through the maintenance of high standards in ophthalmology and the wider eye service.

The RCOphth values its work with NICE and welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have contributed to the development of NICE guidelines on Cataract Surgery and Age Related Macular Degeneration, and to glaucoma guideline revision, and we have regularly provided expert opinion on ophthalmic drugs or devices.

We broadly support these principles and have provided our feedback below.

Our comments

Guideline development

We support principle 7 on giving those with an interest in the topic area the opportunity to comment on and influence recommendations, under which we have submitted evidence and provided comments for consideration. We also agree it is important for guidance development committees to be independent and representative of those who will be affected by the guideline, as under principle 5.

We believe there have been occasions when the pursuit of Principle 5 has meant that NICE has been too restrictive in terms of conflicts of interest, where experts have been excluded from being consulted due to involvement in commercially funded clinical trials. This may overly restrict the field of expertise. However, we do recognise the need for caution where people are relied upon to declare significant conflicts of interest that significantly compromised the guideline and NICE's reputation.

We would also welcome opportunities to suggest topics for guidance which we think are relevant to our members and their patients.

Implementation

Ensuring adoption of recommendations remains a significant challenge. For example, the continuing restriction of access to cataract surgery by some CCGs despite NICE clearly stating

that this is not appropriate. We would welcome greater support from the DoHSC and NHS England, who are closely involved with topic selection, in assisting the adoption of guideline recommendations, particularly regarding CCGs.

General

We value that NICE seeks expert opinion from the College and wishes this relationship to continue. We would welcome some means for ensuring that there is always enough time for us give a detailed and considered response to requests.

For more information please contact policy@rcophth.ac.uk