National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Centre for Guidelines progress report

1. This report provides an update on key issues and developments in the Centre for Guidelines in the period of March 2021.

Summary of activity

Three guidelines were published in March: Caesarean birth; Secondary bacterial infection of eczema and other common skin conditions: antimicrobial prescribing); and Managing COVID-19.

We consulted on 6 guidelines in March. We are continuing to ask stakeholders to tell us if there are particular issues relating to COVID-19 that we should take into account when finalising each guideline for publication.

Two surveillance reviews have published, both of which were exceptional reviews. The team has also completed a further update of the lung cancer algorithm to accommodate new medicines recommended in technology appraisals.

Notable issues and developments

Ongoing response to COVID-19

The update of NHS England speciality guides continued, with guides being integrated into NICE COVID-19 content where appropriate. Seven guides have been withdrawn as content is no longer required. One guide has been fully integrated into the rheumatology COVID-19 guideline and the rapid guideline has been reissued. Three speciality guides have been updated and reissued in March.

We published the Managing COVID-19 guideline, which brings together existing disparate recommendations on care and treatment of people with COVID-19. This involved the integration of seven rapid guidelines, which have now been stood down on the NICE website.

The MAGICapp authoring and publishing platform was used to publish the Managing COVID-19 guideline. Within this publication, new content and recommendations were published for heparins and remdesivir. Use of the MAGICapp platform has enabled the COVID-19 team to develop an efficient international collaboration with the Australian National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence taskforce and the World Health Organisation.

We are taking a 'living guideline' approach by continually updating the Managing COVID-19 guideline with new recommendations on therapeutics for COVID-19.

Other activities

We obtained final sign off in March for a 12-year contract with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, BMJ Publishing Group and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to produce the British National Formulary (BNF) and BNF for children for the NHS. The contract aligns with NICE’s strategy to provide wider and easier access to evidence-based information, expert knowledge and advice. The contract seeks to manage the NHS’s use of print versions and reduce the number of copies distributed with a continued migration from print to digital. The app will be freely available to the public and user registration will allow user feedback for the first time.

Other specific guidelines and advice

We published a clarification on the cannabis-based medicinal products guideline that there is no recommendation against their use in severe treatment-resistant epilepsy. Although there is currently insufficient evidence of safety and effectiveness to support a population-wide practice recommendation this should not be interpreted by healthcare professionals as meaning that they are prevented from considering the use of unlicensed cannabis-based medicinal products where that is clinically appropriate in an individual case.

We updated the guideline on Asthma: diagnosis, monitoring and chronic asthma management to highlight the importance of including advice in personalised action plans on minimising indoor air pollution and reducing exposure to outdoor air pollution.

Key issues and developments

The content strategy was signed off by the Executive Team on 30 March, and we are putting plans in place to achieve 2021/22 business plan objectives that relate to it. This includes building a stronger content operations capability that will build on the strengths in the publishing team to develop standards, processes and policies for content management and design. This will be informed by our work on integrated guidance prototypes for type 2 diabetes, and the learning points and areas for development to both authoring and publishing guidelines identified by using the MAGICapp platform to develop and publish the Managing COVID-19 guideline.

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