

***National Institute for
Clinical Excellence***

Mid City Place
71 High Holborn
London
WC1V 6NA

Tel: 020 7067 5800
Fax: 020 7067 5801
nice@nice.nhs.uk

www.nice.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE

**Independent international experts from
World Health Organisation review NICE
technology appraisals**

The World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations specialised agency for health, will this week begin an independent peer review of the Institute's technology appraisal programme. The review will be carried out by a panel of international experts who will assess the work of the Institute in developing guidance on the use of medicines and other treatments for people using the NHS in England and Wales, against the highest international criteria for quality.

NICE has invited WHO to carry out this review following recommendations made last year in a report on the Institute's work by the House of Commons' Health Select Committee. The Health Select Committee recommended that the Government should instigate an independent detailed peer review of the Institute's work.

Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of NICE, said: "We are delighted that the World Health Organization have agreed to carry out an independent peer review of the Institute's work. We welcome external review of our work as a means of helping us, where required, to improve the quality of our work. The World Health Organization is a distinguished body, and a review under its auspices must be regarded as both robust and objective."

The experts will consider four recently published technology appraisals in order to assess the scientific robustness of the process and methodology used by the Institute to prepare its guidance: The appraisals are:

- etanercept and infliximab for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis
- newer (atypical) antipsychotic drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia
- imatinib (Glivec) for chronic myeloid leukaemia
- ultrasound locating devices for placing central venous catheters.

The review is being carried out by a team of five international experts, led by Kees de Johncheere MBA, Regional Advisor for Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals in the WHO regional office for Europe. The experts carrying out the review are:

- Dr Suzanne Hill (Coordinator of Team), Senior Lecturer and Head of Discipline Clinical Pharmacology at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Technical expert advisor to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, Australia.
- Professor Silvio Garattini, clinical pharmacologist and Director of the Mario Negri Institute in Milan, Italy. Member of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (EMA) Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products.
- Professor Bernard O'Brien, Professor of Health Economics, Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McMaster University, Ontario, Canada.
- Professor Ulrich Schwabe, Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Member of the Ministry of Health Committee on the Positive List and Editor of the Annual Report on the German pharmaceutical market.
- Dr Jos van Loenhout, Physician and Specialist in Internal Medicine. Member of the Dutch Reimbursement Committee.

The WHO experts will make two visits to the UK in order to carry out their review, from 4-11 June and from 16-18 July 2003. They will review documents associated with the technology appraisal guidance under review, and meet those directly involved in the interpretation of the evidence. WHO anticipates that the experts' report will be published in late Summer 2003.

This is one of two reviews currently underway relating to the Institute's technology appraisal programme. In addition to the WHO review NICE is undertaking its planned 3 year review of the process and methodologies used to develop its technology appraisal guidance. The WHO report will be used to inform this review.

Ends

Notes to Editors

About NICE

1. NICE is part of the NHS. It is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on treatments and care for those using the NHS in England and Wales. Its guidance is for healthcare professionals and patients and their carers to help them make decisions about treatment and healthcare. For further information about NICE you can visit www.nice.org.uk.
2. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health:
 - the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS in England and Wales – technology appraisals.
 - the appropriate treatment and care of patients with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS in England and Wales – clinical guidelines.
 - whether interventional procedures used for diagnosis or treatment are safe enough and work well enough for routine use– interventional procedures.NICE also funds three enquiries that undertake research into the way patients are treated to identify ways of improving the quality of care (the investigations are known as confidential enquiries).
3. NICE guidance and recommendations are prepared by independent groups that include professionals working in the NHS and people who are familiar with the issues affecting patients and carers.

About the World Health Organisation

5. The World Health Organization, the United Nations specialised agency for health, was established in 1948. WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health is defined in WHO's Constitution as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. For further information about WHO you can visit www.who.int.
6. In carrying out its activities, WHO's secretariat focuses its work on the following six core functions:
 - Articulating consistent, ethical and evidence-based policy and advocacy positions.
 - Managing information by assessing trends and comparing performance; setting the agenda for, and stimulating research and development.
 - Catalysing change through technical and policy support, in ways that stimulate cooperation and action and help to build sustainable national and inter-country capacity.
 - Negotiating and sustaining national and global partnerships.
 - Setting, validating, monitoring and pursuing the proper implementation of norms and standards.

- Stimulating the development and testing of new technologies, tools and guidelines for disease control, risk reduction, health care management, and service delivery.
7. The appraisals being considered by WHO are:
- etanercept and infliximab for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (no 36, March 2002): <http://www.nice.org.uk/cat.asp?c=35993>
 - newer (atypical) antipsychotic drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia (no 43, June 2002): <http://www.nice.org.uk/cat.asp?c=32878>
 - imatinib (Glivec) for chronic myeloid leukaemia (no 50, October 2002): <http://www.nice.org.uk/cat.asp?c=37604>
 - ultrasound locating devices for placing central venous catheters (no 49, September 2002): <http://www.nice.org.uk/cat.asp?c=36752>.