

Faecal immunochemical tests to triage low risk populations for suspected colorectal cancer referrals in primary care

Faecal immunochemical tests are designed to detect small amounts of blood in stool samples (faecal occult blood) using antibodies specific to human haemoglobin. They have been developed to overcome some of the limitations of guaiac based faecal occult blood tests, which are recommended for use in primary care to triage referral for people presenting with certain clinical signs that may be indicative of colorectal cancer. Use of faecal immunochemical tests may refine the accuracy of the initial triage, which could reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to secondary care and reduce the length of time taken for people to receive further investigations. The tests may also have sampling requirements which are more acceptable to patients. The NICE Diagnostics Assessment Programme will assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of faecal immunochemical tests in order to make recommendations on their use in the NHS.