Quantitative faecal immunochemical tests to guide colorectal cancer pathway referral 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. These tests are already recommended by NICE to guide referrals for low-risk symptomatic population ([quantitative faecal immunochemical tests to guide referral for colorectal cancer in primary care](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/dg30)), that is, people without rectal bleeding who have unexplained symptoms but do not meet the criteria for a suspected cancer pathway referral. These tests could also potentially be used to triage people who meet the criteria for a suspected colorectal cancer pathway referral. Clinicians have observed that many of these people have no abnormal pathology found at colonoscopy, therefore triage with a faecal immunochemical test could mean that people who are unlikely to have colorectal cancer can avoid colonoscopy. It could potentially allow more efficient use of NHS resources and may be beneficial to patients. The NICE diagnostics assessment programme will assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of faecal immunochemical tests in people who meet the criteria for a suspected colorectal cancer pathway referral in order to make recommendations on their use in the NHS.