

# NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

## HEALTH TECHNOLOGY APPRAISAL PROGRAMME

### Equality impact assessment – Guidance development

#### STA Zuranolone for treating postnatal depression

The impact on equality has been assessed during this appraisal according to the principles of the NICE equality scheme.

#### Consultation

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| 1. Have the potential equality issues identified during the scoping process been addressed by the committee, and, if so, how? |
| No issues were identified at scoping.   |

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| 2. Have any other potential equality issues been raised in the submissions, expert statements or academic report, and, if so, how has the committee addressed these?   |
| Yes. Stakeholders raised the following potential equality issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK are at greater risk of developing postnatal depression. People from these communities are less likely to initiate treatment, access community mental health services and have follow-up care for postnatal mental health illness.</li><li>• There is unequal access to specialist perinatal mental health services across England. Many people struggle to access the necessary postnatal care. For example, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic minority backgrounds and people who live in remote areas of England may have limited access to the full services offered by the NHS.</li></ul> The committee considered the impact of the recommendation for people with protected characteristics (including race and pregnancy and maternity). Although people from ethnic minority backgrounds may be at greater risk of |

developing postnatal depression, this cannot be resolved by technology appraisal guidance.

It also considered the impact of the recommendation for people from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds or people who live in remote areas of England. The committee stated that socioeconomic background and geographical access were not equality issues within the scope of the Equality Act 2010. Geographical access to services is an implementation issue that cannot be addressed by a NICE technology appraisal.

The committee noted that its recommendation does not restrict access to treatment for some people over others. It explained that the impact of zuranolone only being prescribed in secondary perinatal mental health specialist services should be considered as a potential health inequality.

The committee acknowledged that a recommendation for zuranolone could improve overall population health, but it may also exacerbate the health inequality for people who have challenges in accessing secondary perinatal mental health specialist services. But the committee noted that a NICE recommendation does not include guidance on the service delivery or to support implementation for disadvantaged groups. The committee noted that it can only recommend technologies as an option for use in NHS. Differences in uptake may determine health inequality impacts and be relevant to the committee's deliberations, but they cannot be addressed by the committee's recommendations (see section 4.12.5 [NICE's manual on health technology evaluations](#)). The committee concluded that population health gains would be maximised if, in the event of a positive recommendation, during implementation specific consideration is given to promote uptake in people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people who live in remote areas. But it noted that this is beyond the remit of the committee.

3. Have any other potential equality issues been identified by the committee, and, if so, how has the committee addressed these?

No other equality issues were identified by the committee.

4. Do the preliminary recommendations make it more difficult in practice for a specific group to access the technology compared with other

groups? If so, what are the barriers to, or difficulties with, access for the specific group?
No.

5. Is there potential for the preliminary recommendations to have an adverse impact on people with disabilities because of something that is a consequence of the disability?
No.

6. Are there any recommendations or explanations that the committee could make to remove or alleviate barriers to, or difficulties with, access identified in questions 4 or 5, or otherwise fulfil NICE's obligations to promote equality?
No.

7. Have the committee's considerations of equality issues been described in the draft guidance, and, if so, where?
Yes. Please see section 3.16 and 3.17.

**Approved by Associate Director (name):** Ross Dent

**Date:** 18/08/2025