



Funding methodological research: can international collaboration be the solution?

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Background

- Clinical research uncertainties – process and methods in place ([NICE Research Recommendations](#))
- [Methodological research](#) uncertainties – process in development and evolving
- Challenges with evidence:
 - Lack of evidence
 - Variable quality evidence
 - Integrating different types of evidence
- Limited funding routes – finite resources



Examples of methodological research

Low quality evidence

- What NICE does with low quality evidence?
- How can we assess the degree of uncertainty arising due to low quality evidence and how can we adjust for it?
- How can we adjust for the risk of known biases in evidence in our decision models?

Iterative searching and keeping guidance up-to-date

- Using reference iterative approaches and emergent approaches to identify evidence for guidance development.
- Methods of identifying when to update a guidance?

Methods for eliciting expert opinion for priors in real time for diagnostics

- Methods for expert elicitation in real time for areas where there is limited evidence; for example obtaining values for priors for use in diagnostics.

From primary care recommendations to quality standards

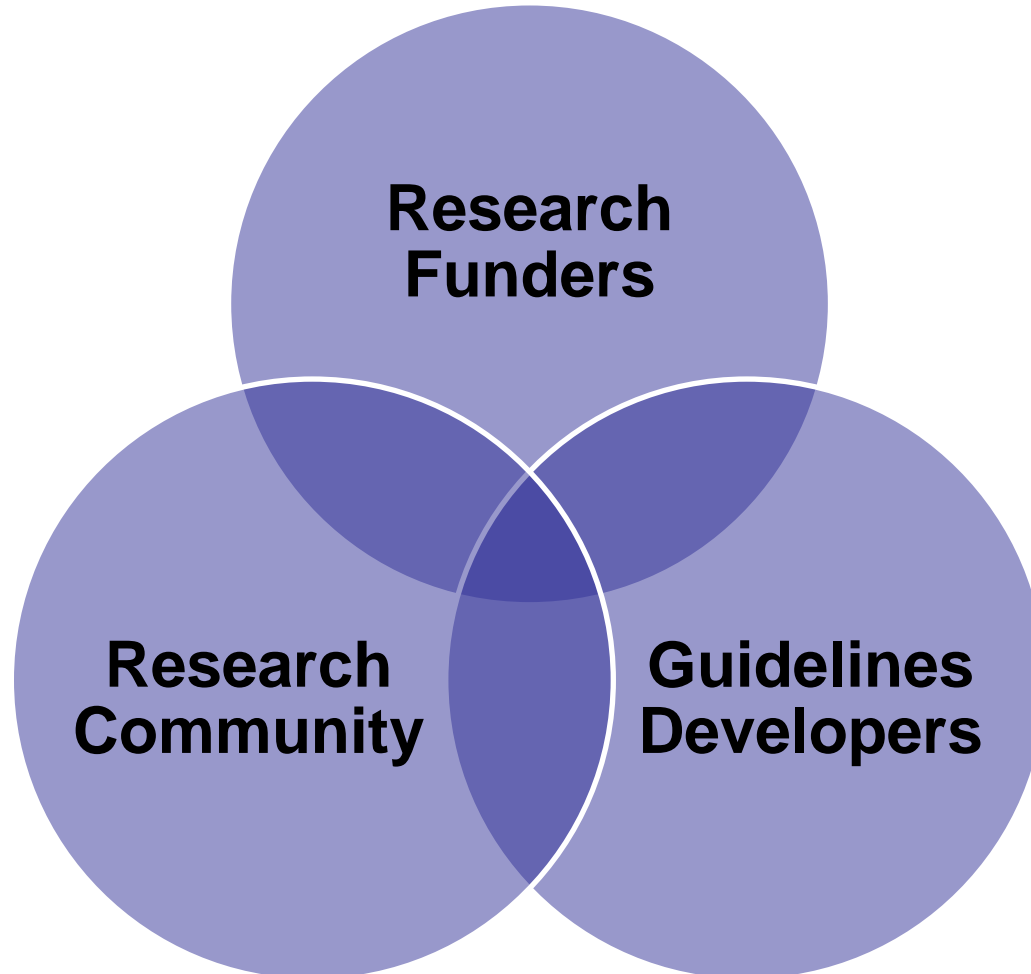
- Best practice in methods for producing quality standards from recommendations
- Using evidence from clinical audits: Is it appropriate?
- Methodology for producing quality standards for social care.

MCDA and decision-making

- Which formal and/or informal consensus techniques best achieve agreement when there is little evidence to guide a recommendation?
- Do some decision techniques guarantee that the recommendation is reflective of what external stakeholders would recommend given the same evidence and decision rules (e.g. MCDA)?



Key stakeholders





Methodological research at NICE

- Methodological uncertainties are identified during:
 - the process of developing guidance, as routine practice;
 - the review to update methods guides, which supports guidance development for each programme.
- Raising the profile of NICE's methodological research programme:
 - to underpin decision-making highlighted in House of Commons Report (2008);
 - to identify current processes and provide recommendations for identifying NICE's methodological research priorities – a scoping study was commissioned (funded by Medical Research Council (MRC) in conjunction with NICE – Longworth et al, 2009).
- Recommendation:
 - an internal methods advisory group (IMAG) was set up to coordinate the identification of methodological research priorities with advice from internal and external research advisors.



IMAG Terms of Reference

- To advise the Institute on its programme of methodological research.
- Identifying, prioritising and promoting important research to fill the evidence gaps related to the Institute's guidance.
- Promoting and securing funding for research to improve the methods used for scoping, producing and reviewing guidance.
- Promoting and funding research to help understand and improve the impact of NICE guidance.
- Promoting a methodological 'research culture' within Institute Centres and its advisory bodies.
- **Working with partners within the UK and internationally to help secure the long-term sustainability of health-services research and health-technology assessments.**
- Coordinating the research in which the Institute is involved to ensure that it conforms with research governance standards.
- To periodically review the strategy and processes used by the Institute to undertake its research and development work.

Role of IMAG in prioritisation

Internal Methods Advisory Group (IMAG) established in 2010

1st Meeting: 2010

42 methodological research priorities were identified across all centres and teams within NICE.

2nd meeting: 2011

A prioritisation criteria was developed and all teams/centres prioritised the 42 research methodological priorities and 18 cross-institute methodological priorities were identified.

3rd Meeting: 2012

Top 6 priorities to be taken to MRC and 12 to be worked with specific teams within NICE.



Prioritisation criteria (adapted from Sculpher et al 2008)

- Is this methods research needed to inform the NICE assessment and decision-making process? Will it affect decisions?
- What are the consequences of not doing this research?
- Will this research impact on patient care?
- Will this research impact on equity?
- Is the topic researchable and how long will it take to resolve this uncertainty?
- What is the scale of the topic contribution – is it a central issue in the assessment process, and does it cut across themes? Does the topic inform gaps in current methods evidence and/or does it inform issues of uncertainty and/or a lack of confidence?
- How is the issue perceived by stakeholders?



Role of MRC

- Research priorities considered by MRC-NIHR Methodology Research Programme (MRP)
- Call for proposals considered in consultation with NICE and other key stakeholders
- £2m was available for the call (high-level areas):
 - 1. Analysis and design of effectiveness studies and their synthesis**
 - 2. Synthesis of evidence from patients, the public and stakeholders**
 - 3. Economic analysis and uncertainty**
 - 4. Measurement and valuation of benefits**
 - 5. Decision making at NICE**
- 9 proposals were received – 8 relevant for NICE



NICE prioritised, MRC-funded methodological research

1. Widening the spectrum of health outcomes used in health technology assessment: integrated synthesis and mapping to QALYs (University of Bristol)
2. Use of generic and condition-specific measures in NICE decision-making (Brunel University)
3. Preparatory study for the re-evaluation of the EQ-5D tariff (PRET) (University of Sheffield)
4. Economic modelling of diagnostic/ treatment pathways in NICE clinical guidelines (Brunel University)
5. Properties of statistical methods for indirect and mixed treatment comparison - a computer simulation evaluation (University of East Anglia)
6. Methodological search filter performance: assessment to improve efficiency of evidence information retrieval (UK Cochrane Centre, National Institute for Health Research)
7. Methods to estimate the NICE cost-effectiveness threshold (University of York)
8. Methods for the indirect estimation of health state utilities (University of Leeds)
9. Methods for strengthening evaluation and implementation: specifying components of behaviour change interventions (University College London)



NEW cross-cutting methodological research priorities

Service Delivery: Clinical Guidelines

Methods for modelling different options for clinical service delivery and identifying costs and benefits

Service Delivery: Public Health

Methods for modelling different options for service configuration of public health services and identifying costs and benefits

Qualitative Evidence

Methods for identifying, interpreting and presenting evidence for incorporating and using qualitative evidence (e.g. Patient/practitioner/societal values, preferences) to inform decision making process

Paediatric disease populations

Methods for extrapolating data from one population group to another

Co-morbid populations

Methods for extrapolating data from one population group to another (both public health and clinical conditions)

Observational data

Methods for identifying, synthesising, interpreting and presenting observational data for use in guidance development



Discussion

- How to proceed:
 - Big public health funders?
 - Increasing Institute's internal capacity for research?
 - Collaborating with external academics as co-bidders?
 - International collaborations/Internationally agreed process of identifying methodological priorities?

Key collaborators



References

1. Longworth et al (2009) 'MRC-NICE Scoping project: Identifying the NICE's methodological research priorities and an initial set of priorities' CHE Research Paper 51, University of York

Links/contact details

Links:

9 MRC funded projects

<http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/howwework/researchanddevelopment/MRCFundedProjects.jsp>

Research and Development, NICE:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/aboutnice/howwework/researchanddevelopment/about.jsp>

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