

Drug Regulation in the Context of the Economic Crisis: the Role of NICE in the UK

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ABSTRACT

The new government in the UK is committed to a major programme of public sector budget cuts in response to the increased public sector deficit resulting from the recession. In spite of assurances that NHS budgets will be protected from the current cuts, in reality the NHS is expected to make efficiency savings of up to £20bn by 2014 to fund existing services and any expansion in demand. At the same time the Secretary of State is embarking on far-reaching changes to the organisation of the NHS. The service is therefore facing an unprecedented period of financial and organisational uncertainty over the next 5 years.

Amidst this change the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is one of the few NHS agencies to emerge with an enhanced role. In future NICE will play an increasing part in the performance management of the NHS by providing the evidence-based quality standards which service providers are expected to achieve. At the same time NICE will maintain and expand its programme of technology assessment. Although there are interesting developments in the appraisal of medical devices and related technologies, this presentation will concentrate on the recent changes to NICE's appraisal of drugs.

Amongst other changes, the role of Single Technology Appraisals (STAs) will be discussed, and the impact of patient access schemes and the end-of-life criteria. Future developments such as the role of NICE in value-based pricing and conditional reimbursement will also be addressed