

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE: INQUIRY INTO ACCESS TO MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES IN WALES

Recommendations 1, 2, 3

1. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should, as a matter of priority, identify means by which a more strategic, coordinated and streamlined approach to medical technology adoption will be delivered. This approach should:
 - a. be driven by clinical and population need;
 - b. ensure effective prioritisation of investment in new evidence-based technologies, alongside a programme of disinvestment in out-dated/ineffective equipment;
 - c. provide equity of access to appropriate new treatments for Welsh patients; and
 - d. facilitate the engagement of all stakeholders, including clinicians, patients, industry and research partners.

2. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should set out the steps that he will take to ensure that a strategic approach to medical technology development and adoption adequately encompasses the primary and community care voices, and that innovation and best practice in primary and community care settings are identified and shared more widely.

3. That the Minister for Health and Social Services, within 12 months of the publication of this report, should develop options for an all-Wales medical technologies appraisal mechanism, to undertake a similar function in respect of medical technologies as the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG) does for medicines.

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government will continue to work with health boards, NHS trusts and other key stakeholders to develop and deliver a nationally co-ordinated approach to technology appraisal, adoption and discard.

The Welsh Government recognises the strength of the AWMSG approach, which will be one of a number of options for consideration during 2015. The Committee's evidence and report will be a useful source of reference and expert opinion in developing these options. Officials will also work closely with key delivery stakeholders to ensure that the selected approach is efficient and effective, as well as being strategic, coordinated and streamlined.

Our approach to technology appraisal and adoption will reflect the principles of prudent healthcare and co-production. This will ensure that both the development and the delivery of any future strategy for medical technology, innovation and best practice will draw on a wide range of voices. That will include not only clinicians and service providers in primary and community care, but also the public and patients. That is particularly important for the kinds of digital and consumer technology which enable more shared responsibility for health and wellbeing, and help to reduce demand for healthcare services.

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It is highly likely that there will be financial implications to this work, full costs will be calculated as part of the further work to scope and develop an approach which is the most appropriate for Wales.

Recommendations 4, 5

- 4. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should take steps to ensure that NICE guidance on medical technologies is disseminated within NHS Wales in a timely way and fully taken into account when planning and delivering services.**
- 5. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should ensure that the uptake of recommended medical technologies across Wales, including those recommended by NICE, is measured as part of a formal audit process.**

Response: Accept in principle

Guidance issued by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is circulated promptly to NHS Wales organisations directly by NICE, through Welsh Government policy and professional leads, and through national clinical networks.

In May 2014 a NICE Liaison Group was established to raise awareness of NICE guidance and to support health boards to take account of guidance when planning and delivering services. The NHS Wales Planning Framework includes references to NICE guidance, and this will be further reviewed following an evaluation of the 2015-2018 planning process, which is currently under way.

As stated previously, the mechanism for technology appraisal will be selected following consideration of options. It will make provision for monitoring the uptake and adoption of technologies across Wales, but this may not be a formal audit process, and it may focus on high impact technologies, so potentially it might not cover all NICE recommended technologies.

NICE guidance on medical technologies is not mandatory and it may not always be appropriate to adopt NICE recommended technologies. There may be alternative technologies or treatment pathways, and NICE technology guidance should not automatically override the responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of patient, or reached by agreement with them, following the principle of prudent healthcare.

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Recommendations 6, 7

- 6. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should develop and establish a more strategic approach to the commissioning of new medical technologies in Wales which must be linked to a robust appraisal and evaluation process.**

- 7. That the Minister for Health and Social Services should ensure that a national approach to commissioning is adopted in cases where:**
 - a. the budget impact of prospective medical technologies is high;**
 - b. wider population needs need to be met;**
 - c. services need to be commissioned across health board boundaries;
and/or**
 - d. there is potential to commission treatment from elsewhere in the UK.**

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Health Specialist Services Committee (WHSSC) provides a national approach to commissioning in certain clinical areas, but it would not be appropriate to extend its remit to cover all medical technologies, since many of them are of a non-specialist nature. These kinds of technologies are covered generally by NHS Wales Shared Services, which provides a national procurement service.

The development of options for a national approach to technology appraisal and adoption will take account of how it will link to commissioning and procurement services, so that the appropriate technology adoption route is made clearer and applied consistently across Wales. This will also allow more co-ordinated decommissioning and discard of technology, where appropriate.

Recommendation 8

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should provide details of the actions he will take to further develop the approach to medical technology adoption in Wales. This should include an indication of how the Commissioning through Evaluation project in England, and other options for evaluation, will be explored and adapted to fit the Welsh context.

Response: Accept in principle

Wales is involved in the Commissioning through Evaluation programme, which is looking at a small number of specialist treatment technologies. It is not clear how this approach could be applied to a much larger number of general medical technologies, but this will be explored as part of the development and consideration of options for technology appraisal and adoption.

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Recommendation 9

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should give consideration to putting mechanisms in place to maximise the benefits of new medical technologies for patients across Wales by ensuring that NHS staff are able to access appropriate training.

Response: Accept

Many technologies require appropriate training or changes in practice and behaviour. That is not limited to NHS staff, since many technologies are designed for use by patients and carers, in non-NHS settings. Training requirements will therefore form part of the appraisal, adoption and evaluation of medical technologies.

The importance of training when introducing new technologies will also be raised with NHS Wales Workforce and OD Directors, so that they can advise on how staff training can help accelerate adoption and maximise the benefits of new medical technologies.

Recommendation 10

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should outline the steps he will take to facilitate the further development of clinical trials and needs-led research and development in Wales including how this will relate to the medical technology assessment/appraisal process.

Response: Accept

The National Institute for Social Care and Health Research (NISCHR) works with a range of UK funding partners, medical research charities and other UK Health Departments, participating in a wide range of UK programmes which open significant funding streams to researchers based in Wales.

Health Research Wales has played an important role in facilitating collaborative partnerships to develop medical technologies and associated clinical trials. To support its further development, this service will form a core part of the new NISCHR infrastructure to be delivered by the NISCHR Support Centre from 1 April 2015.

Needs-led technology development in Wales is supported through mechanisms such as the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) Catalyst Programme and the Health technology and Telehealth Fund.

The Welsh Government will support further programmes of this type, which align technology development to identified needs and challenges.

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Recommendation 11

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should ensure that models of appropriate patient and carer representation are considered and put in place in medical and assistive technology research and development, appraisal, and evaluation.

Response: Accept

Schemes funded by NISCHR and other UK funding partners support public and patient involvement in all stages of the R&D process and place particular emphasis on the importance of early engagement and continued interaction between collaborators and appropriate members of the public, service users and patients.

NISCHR supports a public involvement network which ensures public and patient input into research proposals at all stages of development. This network of more than 100 people will be further developed as part of the new NISCHR infrastructure to be delivered from 1 April 2015.

Recommendation 12

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should set out the actions that he will take, and associated timescales, to ensure that NHS Wales's financial structures and budgetary processes can effectively support appropriate medical technology adoption. This should include reference to longer-term planning and ensuring closer alignment between capital and revenue funding.

Response: Accept

The NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014 supports longer-term capital and revenue planning, allowing NHS Wales to more effectively support appropriate medical technology adoption. The Welsh Government business case development process includes a requirement to connect capital and revenue funding and affordability.

The NHS Planning Framework sets out a prioritised and integrated service planning approach, which brings together service, workforce, revenue and capital plans. The NHS Planning Framework issued in October 2014 supports appropriate technology adoption, and the resulting Integrated Medium Plans from NHS Wales organisations will be reviewed in spring 2015.

The Welsh Government will consider specific actions and requirements to be included in the next NHS Planning Framework, to be issued autumn 2015. The Welsh Government will consider ways to further strengthen alignment between capital and revenue funding as part of its review of the NHS Wales Capital Guidance, Business Case and Approval Process.

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Recommendation 13

That the Minister for Health and Social Services should work with local authorities and health boards to share good practice and to explore the development of a funding model based on the patient pathway.

Response: Accept in Principle

Health Boards and Local Authorities are accountable for the delivery of health and care services, including public health and wellbeing. Those services are delivered directly and through a wide range of service providers, particularly in primary and community care sectors.

The Welsh Government encourages and supports local authorities and health boards to work together and with others. It also encourages more integrated working and better sharing of information between health and care providers.

Exploration of new funding models will take place alongside the wider work to improve access to medical technologies in Wales.