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Piloting a new scoping process-the NICE guideline on hip fracture

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Background: The National Clinical Guidelines Centre (NCGC) is a new centre formed from the merger of 4 smaller centres on 1st April 2009. We are commissioned by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to produce clinical guidelines for the National Health Service in England and Wales. Our experience is that clinical guideline development can be very labour intensive and it is sometimes difficult to make accurate plans for the project resources required. Working to deadlines set by the commissioners of the project means that it is important to keep the work manageable.

Purpose: The aim of this study was to establish whether by changing the method for scoping the guideline we could improve the efficiency of clinical guideline production.

Methods: The NICE process manual 'The Guidelines Manual' specifies how a scope should be developed for a NICE guideline. A new process was proposed with the aim of enabling us to plan the amount of work in the guideline more effectively and thus be able to achieve the tight timelines around guideline development set by NICE. The piloted process involved us recruiting the development group chair earlier in the process than previously, convening a scoping group that consisted of representatives from the developers, the commissioners (NICE) and the chair and holding a stakeholder workshop.

Results: The initial impact of the various aspects of the process change in this pilot case will be presented from the developers' perspective.

Discussion: We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this change to methodology and consider whether it achieves its aims of making the workload easier to plan and manage.