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The Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance is a registered national charity dedicated to raising awareness and helping people with psoriatic arthritis and its associated skin disorder known as psoriasis.

Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance is a Registered Company Limited by Guarantee No: 3055414. Registered office: Faulkner House, Victoria Street, St. Albans, Herts. AL1 3SE

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Always consult your own doctors.

Printing By Photolit Printing
Tel: St. Albans 01727 857112

Typesetting & Design By Eye for Graphics
Tel: St. Albans 01727 835968

On 1 April 2005 NICE joined with the Health Development Agency to become the new National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (also to be known as NICE). NICE is the independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health. NICE guidance is developed using the expertise of the NHS and the wider healthcare community including NHS staff, healthcare professionals, patients and carers, industry and the academic world.

Clinical guidelines are recommendations by NICE on the appropriate treatment and care of people with specific diseases and conditions within the NHS. They are based on the best available evidence. Guidelines help health professionals in their work, but they do not replace their knowledge and skills.

What NICE calls technology appraisals are recommendations on the use of new and existing medicines and treatments within the NHS, such as:

- medicines
- medical devices (for example, hearing aids or inhalers)
- diagnostic techniques (tests used to identify diseases)
- surgical procedures (such as repairing hernias)
- health promotion activities (for example, ways of helping people with diabetes manage their condition).

NICE bases recommendations on a review of clinical and economic evidence. Clinical evidence measures how well the medicine or treatment works. NICE also takes account of economic evidence, which is how well the medicine or treatment works in relation to how much it costs the NHS – does it represent value for money? NICE acknowledges that something can be both expensive and value for money.

The NICE Research and Development (R&D) programme promotes and commissions research, with the aim of raising healthcare standards to the highest possible levels within the NHS. The programme focuses on:

- working with research organisations, patients and other partners to explain NICE's research needs
- using research to improve the methods that NICE uses to develop guidance
- using research to find out how NICE can help the NHS implement and apply NICE guidance better.

NICE guidance is produced to improve the quality of care provided to patients.

NICE is committed to producing guidance for the NHS that:

- Meets the needs of patients, carers and the public.
- Involves patients, carers and the public in its development.

Patient and carer involvement

Opportunities for patient and carer involvement exist at a number of levels:

- National patient/carer organisations are consulted at all stages of guidance development.
- All NICE committees and working groups include at least two lay members with an interest in patient and carer issues.
- All NICE guidance is provided in formats written for patients, carers and the public.
- From time to time, the Institute commissions additional work on patient and carer views to inform the development of its guidance.

The NICE Patient Involvement Unit provides information, support and training to patients and carers (both organisations and individuals) that have an interest in NICE guidance.

Public involvement

Although NICE decisions are based on evidence provided by clinicians, researchers and patient experts, they are set against a background of social values and judgements. It is therefore important to take into account what the public thinks about key issues that inform the development of guidance NICE issues on the use of treatments and the care that people can expect in the NHS.

For this reason the Institute set up a Citizens Council, with 30 members drawn from all sections of the population, to have their say on wider issues. Council members reflect a cross section of age groups, social circumstances, ethnic backgrounds, regional differences and abilities. Their views and opinions provide a backdrop against which NICE and the independent Committees that advise it can develop their recommendations.

The Citizen's Council brings the views of the public to NICE decision-making. The Council meets twice a year in 3-day sessions, and members deliberate on questions put to them by the Board of NICE. Meetings are open to the public.

NICE will play an important role in the future of all patients, particularly those with a chronic long-term illness. There are currently three psoriatic therapies being appraised by NICE, etanercept and infliximab for psoriatic arthritis and etanercept and eflazimab for psoriasis, these drugs are classed as anti-TNF therapies and will play a major role in the treatment of the severe disease in the future. Both appraisals are expected to be published in January 2006. Further details about NICE can be found at www.nice.org.uk