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Michael Drummond
PhD Professor of Health
Economics, Centre for
Health Economics,
University of York

What are the HTA processes in the UK?

- **Health technology assessment (HTA)** has a long history in the UK. In recent years HTA has become synonymous with the activities of the **National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)** in England, although important entities also exist in Scotland (**Scottish Medicines Consortium [SMC]**) and Wales (**All Wales Medicines Strategy Group [AWMSG]**).
- The NICE technology appraisals programme is coordinated by the institute's Centre for Health Technology Evaluation, which develops guidance on the use of new and existing medicines, treatments and procedures within the NHS.
- NICE commissions so-called technology assessment groups to prepare assessment reports for consideration by the **Technology Appraisal Committee**, which is the primary decision-making body in the production of guidance on new health technologies.
- Guidelines on the methods of technology appraisal, which have been issued by NICE, embody the concept of the **reference case**.
- The standard approach to technology appraisals is called **multiple technology appraisal (MTA)**. MTAs take 54 weeks from initiation of the process to issuing of guidance.
- NICE has also developed the **single technology appraisal** process for the review of single technologies for a sole indication. This is similar to the assessment process in Scotland and is a little quicker than the MTA process.
- Advantages of NICE's approach to technology appraisals include its methodological rigour, the encouragement of extensive stakeholder involvement and the fact that its activities are fairly transparent.
- Issues of concern are a lack of independence of NICE from the government, the amount of time it takes to conduct an assessment, the use of a cost-effectiveness threshold, the use of the quality-adjusted life-year as a measure of health benefit, and the uneven implementation of NICE guidance across the NHS.
- The HTA procedures in Scotland and Wales are more timely, but the SMC and AWMSG face many of the other challenges also faced by NICE.

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