

Collaborative working between Information Specialists at the National Collaborating Centres and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

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Aim

To describe the collaborative network used by the information specialists at the National Collaborating Centres (NCCs) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) whilst working on the development of clinical guidelines for England and Wales. NICE, the NCCs and the information specialist role Clinical guideline topics are referred to NICE by the Department of Health. The NCCs are commissioned by NICE to oversee the development of the clinical guidelines upon which NICE guidance is based (1).

Topic selection

The information specialists at NICE support the process of selecting topics for clinical guidelines by gathering information (e.g. details of the existing evidence base, epidemiological data) to inform the decision-making of the NICE topic selection team and affiliated groups.

Guideline development

The core role of the information specialists at the NCCs is to identify the evidence base to answer guideline questions. Following the methods set out in the NICE 'Guidelines manual' this includes: contributing to question formulation; identifying the sources to search; developing search strategies to search sources effectively and efficiently; creating and maintaining reference management databases and documenting the search process. The development of short clinical guidelines is overseen by a technical team at NICE.

Collaboration

Best practice is shared and further developed between the information specialists at the NCCs and NICE by a variety of means:

Topics of shared interest, e.g. search platforms and copyright law, are discussed at bi-annual meetings; speakers from external organisations are invited to talk about their work with the aim of aiding continuous professional development.

A dedicated discussion list is used to share new information, to seek answers to problems, and to share search filters, import filters and other useful material.

A wiki has recently been created for experimenting with online

collaboration.

Joint working groups are set up as necessary to take forward specific methodological issues.

Joint presentations are given at health information and guideline methodology conferences.

In addition, the information specialists collaborate with a range of professional interest groups, both national and international (e.g. SEARCH an information specialists' working group of the Guidelines International Network).