

The use of exploratory analyses within the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence single technology appraisal process: an evaluation and qualitative analysis

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

In the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) single technology appraisal (STA) process, independent researchers called Evidence Review Groups (ERGs) assess a company evidence submission. This assessment often includes exploring uncertainties in the information in the submission by conducting alternative analyses. We aimed to explore the number and type of these explorations undertaken by the ERGs. NICE requested that this work be carried out in order to better understand how ERGs conduct alternative analyses.

We looked at more than 400 documents to determine what analyses had been done by the ERGs, the reasons for these analyses and how this information was used. We separated the types of analyses into categories and summarised the reasons for and content of the analyses. We also looked at how the NICE Appraisal Committees (ACs) used this information in making their decisions.

We found that ERG reports had many differences in the amount and detail of their analyses. Over 93% of ERG reports had at least one of these analyses, with an average number of eight analyses per report. These analyses had more influence on recommendations earlier in the STA process than later on.

The ERGs frequently carry out analyses to better assess how uncertain information affects results. In this way, they aim to improve and clarify the information submitted by companies. These analyses are used by the ACs at NICE to help make their decisions on whether or not to recommend treatments.

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