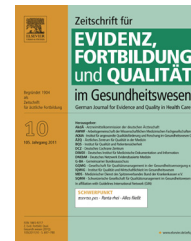




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## SCHWERPUNKT

# The NICE process for developing quality standards and indicators



## *Der NICE-Prozess zur Entwicklung von Qualitätsstandards und Qualitätsindikatoren*

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### KEYWORDS

NICE;  
quality standards;  
quality improvement;  
clinical indicators

**Summary** This paper describes the core principles and processes used by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to develop quality standards and quality indicators from evidence based guidelines.

### SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER

NICE;  
Qualitätsstandards;  
Qualitätsverbesserung;  
klinische Indikatoren

**Zusammenfassung** Der Beitrag beschreibt die wichtigsten Prinzipien und Prozesse, die das *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence* (NICE) zur Entwicklung von Qualitätsstandards und Qualitätsindikatoren aus evidenzbasierten Leitlinien einsetzt.

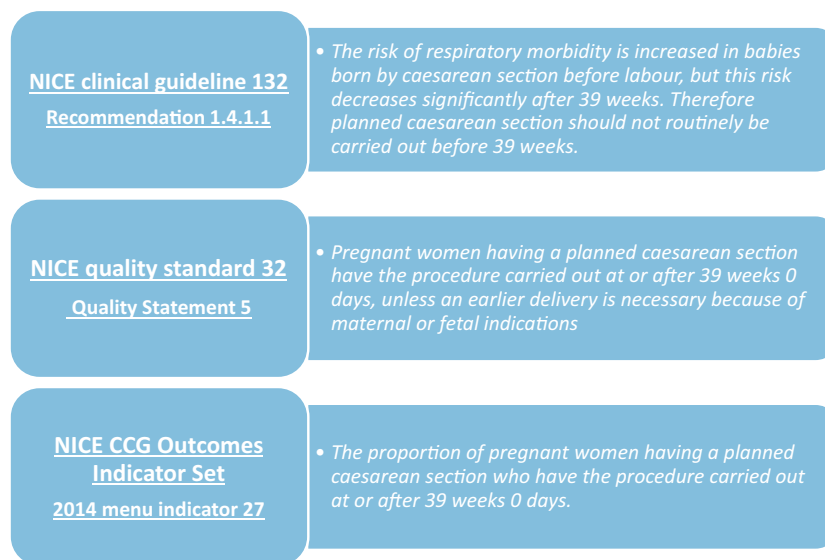
## Introduction

Measuring quality and applying quality indicators are important to most care systems [1–3]. This reinforces the need to standardise the way indicators are developed [3,4]. The UK's

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has established a transparent and systematic process for developing high-quality standards and indicators that are underpinned by a robust evidence base. This paper partially updates previously published work on NICE's processes for developing quality standards and indicators [5,6].

NICE develop a range of products for health, public health and social care services in the UK. This paper focuses on the processes used to develop NICE quality standards and NICE indicators based on NICE guidelines. These “products” whilst linked in terms of the evidence base used to inform

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**Figure 1** Examples of a NICE guideline recommendation, a NICE quality standard statement and NICE indicator

them and the audiences that use them, are different in their construction and purpose:

- NICE guidelines are systematically developed recommendations, based on the best available evidence, intended to guide decisions for a particular area of health, public health or social care.
- NICE quality standards are a concise set of prioritised statements designed to drive measureable quality improvements within a particular area of health, public health or social care at a local and national level. They are derived from the best available evidence such as NICE guidance and other evidence sources accredited by NICE
- NICE indicators generally measure outcomes that are considered to reflect the quality of care or processes linked by evidence to improved outcomes. The evidence they use comes from NICE quality standards, NICE guidance or NICE accredited guidance.

Figure 1 compares a NICE guideline recommendation, a NICE quality standard statement and a NICE indicator.

## Core principles for developing NICE quality standards and NICE indicators

Figure 2 outlines the seven core principles of the NICE process for developing NICE quality standards and NICE indicators.

### NICE quality standards

NICE quality standards aim to shape measureable quality improvements by identifying the key areas for improvement within a particular area of health, public health or social care.

NICE quality standards can be used for a range of purposes at a local and national level, although anecdotal evidence

suggests they are primarily being used to drive local quality improvement initiatives. For example, the NICE quality standard for ovarian cancer [7] has been used to define high quality care and drive quality improvements [8].

To date NICE has published sixty seven quality standards, all of which are available on the NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)). NICE quality standards are evidence based and primarily underpinned by NICE guidance, although other guidance can be used if it meets NICE's accreditation criteria [9] (NICE accredited guidance). Using NICE guidance or NICE accredited guidance to underpin the NICE quality standards means that reviewing or reassessing the underlying evidence base is not a required part of the development process.

NICE quality standards are a concise set of statements which are clear and measurable, and aspirational but achievable. Each quality standard generally contains approximately six to eight quality statements, but may range from three statements up to fifteen statements in exceptional circumstances. Each statement has related measures which help those implementing the quality standard monitor and demonstrate their achievement against the statement.

### How quality standards are developed

NICE quality standards are developed by an independent Quality Standards Advisory Committee with technical and administrative support from NICE [10].

The committee is made up of twenty one standing members from a range of backgrounds. It includes commissioners of health and social care services, hospital doctors, general practitioners/family practitioners, public health and social care practitioners, and lay members. They work with five specialist committee members with specialist knowledge in the topic area. Figure 3 summarises the process used to develop NICE quality standards.

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