

Evidence

Advice, guidance and standards

We develop evidence-based advice, guidance and standards to support improvements in the quality of healthcare people receive.

Working with national and international experts, we identify, develop and share evidence for improvement. This evidence is available to healthcare professionals to support them in providing safe and effective care, and to the public to inform them of the quality of care they can expect to receive.

We also assess new technologies in healthcare through the Scottish Health Technologies Group, and support the Scottish Medicines Consortium which assesses the clinical and cost-effectiveness of newly licensed medicines.

Our approach ensures that our work is based on the best available evidence. For example, the national clinical standards we develop are informed by Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) guidelines and may also draw on evidence notes (short summaries we produce of the published clinical and/or cost-effectiveness for a particular technology, device or service organisation). They may also be informed by health technology assessments and systematic reviews, as well as sources such as National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

Following publication of our standards, we continue to work with NHS boards, the independent healthcare sector and voluntary organisations to support their implementation.





Obesity

£0.9 Billion to
£3 Billion

Scotland has one of the highest levels of obesity among developed countries and it is estimated that by 2030 the total cost of obesity to Scottish society could range from £0.9 billion to £3 billion¹.

A SIGN guideline on obesity was published in 2010. Subsequently, an evidence note was produced that summarises evidence on the clinical and cost-effectiveness of weight management programmes for adults. Overall, the evidence suggests that a combination of diet, physical and behavioural therapy is more effective in achieving weight loss compared with diet alone or standard care. This beneficial effect may last up to 2 years or longer. Evidence on the relative effectiveness of individual or group weight management programmes is unclear.

An evidence note on bariatric surgery in adults was also produced. Bariatric surgery is a branch of general surgery which enables obese patients to lose weight. In 2008, 111 gastric banding and 178 gastric bypass procedures were undertaken in Scotland. This evidence note also supported the SIGN guideline. It established that it is currently not possible to identify which patient groups will gain most from bariatric surgery based on both clinical and cost-effectiveness evidence.

¹The Scottish Government. Preventing overweight and obesity in Scotland: a route map towards healthy weight. 2010 [cited 2010 Apr 9]; Available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/302783/0094795.pdf>

SIGN application

20,000

downloads

SIGN developed a groundbreaking application (app) for smartphones and tablet computers.

The free app provides a quick and easy way of accessing SIGN guidelines, which provide recommendations for effective and consistent practice in the management of clinical conditions.

Currently the app includes the most popular SIGN guidelines, which cover a range of topics including diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, eczema, and the management of asthma and psoriasis.

In addition to making guidelines more accessible, the app has delivered environmental benefits and significant savings by reducing the costs associated with printing, transporting and storing hard copies of guidelines.

Since its launch, downloads for the app are nearing 20,000 from a diverse range of countries across the globe including Australia, Botswana, Madagascar, Vietnam and the USA. At one point, the app was the third most popular medical app available on iTunes.

The app will continue to be updated as more clinical guidelines are produced.



iPhone, iPad & iPod Touch



Android phones & tablets



Stroke rehabilitation

Third

most common
cause of death

Stroke is the third most common cause of death and the most frequent cause of severe adult disability in Scotland.

Seventy thousand people are living with stroke and its consequences. Those who survive a stroke can find their lives affected by a wide range of impairments, limitations and complications.

Rehabilitation involves complex interventions that are often required to be 'tailor-made' to the individual patient.

A revised SIGN guideline was published in June 2010, stating that the effectiveness of stroke units has led increasingly to patients who are better able to respond positively to post stroke rehabilitation. However, it also called for more research to evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation techniques that can aid the recovery of patients and allow results to be compared across studies.

The guideline emphasises the importance of the first 12 months following a stroke and focuses on:

- general management (including body positioning and exercise to aid recovery following a stroke)
- rehabilitation
- the prevention and management of complications
- discharge planning, and
- provision of information.



