

**James Lind Alliance Meeting, 3 December 2005 - Taking patients' and clinicians' questions seriously about the effects of treatment seriously.**

**Abstract – Barbara Meredith**

The National Institute for health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) produces guidance for the NHS, according to remits from the Department of Health. NICE guidance includes technology appraisals, clinical guidelines, interventional procedures and, following merger with the Health Development Agency in April 2005, public health programme and intervention guidance (which is more widely targeted than the NHS). Coverage is variable across England (public health guidance); England and Wales (clinical guidelines and technology appraisals); and England, Wales and Scotland (interventional procedures).

Patient and public, or 'lay', involvement is integral to all NICE processes and standing committees, supported by the Patient and Public Involvement Programme. Individuals and 'stakeholder' organisations contribute in different ways to technology appraisals, guidelines, and interventional procedures guidelines.

Such activity recognises the importance of integrating a patient/carer/public perspective in all NICE's work, at the same time as raising questions and challenges, including: use of qualitative evidence; balancing 'lay' and 'professional' views; considering the extent to which the 'evidence' incorporates patient and/or public perspectives; prioritising research and guidance recommendations, and tackling 'unanswered' questions. The iterative nature of the process offers opportunities to build on patient/carer issues 'next time around'.