

COMMENTS ON

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CLINICAL
EXCELLENCE**

**HEALTH TECHNOLOGY APPRAISAL: CORONARY ARTERY
STENTS FOR THE PREVENTION OF ISCHAEMIC HEART DISEASE
(REVIEW OF GUIDANCE NO. 71) - ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh welcomes the opportunity to comment on the technical content of the Assessment Report for this appraisal, prior to the meeting of the Appraisal Committee on 01/02/06.

The technical content is considered thorough and reasonable, but it is felt that some points require further attention:

- The title is strange: coronary artery stents have nothing to do with the prevention of ischaemic heart disease and are, of course, used to treat it.
- Guidance and the need for it: the existing NICE appraisal document gives clear guidance on when it is appropriate to use drug eluting stents. It is not clear whether or not this new document proposes to change the guidance and, if it does not, then the document will serve no practical purpose, indeed it may lead to a greater deal of confusion and uncertainty. A clear statement as to which patient should be offered drug eluting stents must be included; methodological criticisms of the latest cost-effective analysis may mean there is little justification for changing the existing guidance.
- Although detailed and lengthy, the document is low in some specifics eg:
 - What subgroups have the most to gain?
 - What is the recommended duration of anti-platelet therapy?
 - What is the place of drug eluting stent use where a risk of re-stenosis is significant? (eg last remaining coronary artery). This issue is not addressed, possibly because there have been no randomised control trials.
- Cost Effectiveness: the methodology of cost-effective analysis is complex and parameters on which it is based are felt to be constantly changing. The argument that drug-eluting stents are not cost-effective therefore can be disputed.

There is an opportunity for the NHS to negotiate major discounts as more competitor stents are produced (likely in the next few months or years), and the document might

contain a statement on possible negotiating strategies with industry to achieve price reductions and economies.

- Finally, the document might usefully refer to the appropriateness of using newer and less researched technologies.

All College responses are published on the College website www.rcpe.ac.uk.

10 January 2006