Updates

NICE public health guidance: what’s new?

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NICE published five pieces of public health guidance in early 2008:

- Physical Activity and the Environment (Public Health guidance no 8), http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11917
- Community Engagement (9) http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11929
- Smoking Cessation (10), http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11925

Selected profiles

Community engagement

Engaging with communities is clearly essential to attaining many public health goals. A conceptual model was developed, identifying different types of benefits and outcomes achieved through different levels of engagement (information, consultation, co-production, delegation and control). However, this area poses major methodological difficulties for evaluation, and evidence is variable.

The recommendations are based on systematic reviews of a range of different types of evidence. They define the prerequisites for community engagement (including long-term investment, organization and cultural change in the public sector); the infrastructure of training and resources, and specific approaches for increasing the levels of community engagement and the principles for evaluation. The use of agents for change (such as peer educators, health champions and neighbourhood wardens) and mechanisms such as tenant-controlled organizations are examples of approaches that can involve local communities in planning, designing and delivering health initiatives.

Smoking cessation

Reducing smoking among people in lower social groups will do more than any other single measure to reduce health inequalities. The new guidance on the best provision of smoking cessation services puts particular emphasis on manual groups, some ethnic minority groups and pregnant women. Although focussing on the NHS Stop Smoking Services, the guidance also covers advice and help for smokers given in primary and secondary care, community pharmacies, and by local authorities and workplaces.

It updates a NICE Technology Appraisal by recommending action on the use of nicotine replacement therapy. This is an addition to the suite of guidance documents from NICE on smoking cessation support through brief advice, workplace interventions and the clinical use of varenicline.

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New referrals

Recent new topic referrals to the Centre for Public Health Excellence cover:

- optimum provision of needle exchange schemes,
- mechanisms to reduce inequalities in immunisation uptake and
- the prevention and identification of alcohol use disorders in adolescents and adults.

All public health guidance can be accessed via www.nice.org.uk/guidance.