

LETTERS

NICE ON HEAD INJURY

NICE replies to concerns about scanning patients with head injury who are taking anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs

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Recent National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines recommended computed tomography for patients with head injury who are taking warfarin. We understand Heywood's concerns that other anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs were not included.^{1 2} The scope of the guideline did include other anticoagulant or antiplatelet drugs where no other indication for computed tomography existed. No evidence meeting the inclusion criteria was identified in patients with head injury who were using these agents and no other indication for computed tomography was listed in the guidance (this included the study by Nishijima and colleagues in which not all patients were scanned).³ It is too early in the life of the new anticoagulants to assess their impact in head injury. The Guideline Development Group decided that evidence from non-head injury or trauma registry populations had seriously limited applicability. The group also decided that with the lack

of evidence it was better to make a research recommendation and leave it to clinicians to use their judgment as to whether to scan patients of concern in these other groups.⁴

Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Hodgkinson S, Pollit V, Sharpin C, Lecky F; on behalf of the Guideline Development Group. Early management of head injury: summary of updated NICE guidance. *BMJ* 2014;348:g104. (22 January.)
- 2 Heywood M. Computed tomography after head injury for patients taking any anticoagulant, not just warfarin? *BMJ* 2014;348:g1431. (12 February.)
- 3 Nishijima D, Offerman S, Ballard D, Vinson D, Chetipally U, Rauchwerger A, et al. Immediate and delayed traumatic intracranial haemorrhage in patients with head trauma and pre-injury warfarin or clopidogrel. *Ann Emerg Med* 2012;59:460-8.
- 4 National Clinical Guideline Centre. Head Injury. Appendices. Research recommendation 3, appendix N. www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/14355/66329/66329.pdf.

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