



Developing a clinical guideline for treating hypertension in Jordan

"For a long time we have talked about prescribing issues and problems, but now for the first time we have a serious international collaboration to turn that talk into practical tools to assist the medical profession. This is an excellent initiative that should produce real health benefits, and our task now is to keep the momentum going."

- Rania Bader, Pharmaceutical Policy Consultant, MeTA Jordan

In 2008 the Jordanian Ministry of Health approached NICE, through the Department for International Development and the World Bank, to ask for help with its ongoing healthcare reform agenda, aiming to improve the quality of care and rationalise drug use in the Jordanian public sector.

In response to their request, newly-established NICE International began to work with officials in Jordan, led by the High Health Council and the Ministry of Health / Clinical Pharmacy Department, to develop a programme of work to meet their needs. Initially, the NICE International team conducted a series of fact-finding visits to the country over a 10 month period, establishing relationships with key stakeholders in the Jordanian healthcare system, culminating in a meeting with the Health Minister.

Following these meetings, in March 2009 NICE International ran a three-day workshop in the Dead Sea region funded by the World Bank and DfID. The workshop offered training on the basic principles and methods for health technology assessment and best clinical practice standards. Participants representing all major stakeholders in Jordanian health policy discussed how these can be applied to policy making, and set out a realistic plan of action for implementing such guidelines in Jordan.

During the course of the workshop, hypertension and diabetes were identified by Jordanian delegates as priority areas for policy development.

Following this, in the summer of 2009 NICE International began to work with the Jordanian Ministry of Health to run a pilot programme to develop an evidence-based treatment care pathway for one of the high priority disease areas identified in the Dead Sea meeting: hypertension.



Hypertension is widespread health concern in Jordan, particularly in rural areas, with 50% of those suffering, remaining undiagnosed, and 50% of those diagnosed, not having their hypertension appropriately controlled.

NICE International brought together and facilitated a guideline development group to produce the pilot care pathway for hypertension in Jordan – once again supported by the World Bank, the UK's Department of Health and DFID. Comprising Jordanian senior clinicians, GPs, epidemiologists and policy makers, the group was locally-led and supported by local technical and administrative teams. The group met twice in Amman in the summer of 2009, and their discussions informed subsequent analytical work and modelling carried out by UK and Jordanian teams, including those at Brunel University, The National Collaborating Centre for Chronic Disease and NICE International.

The NICE International team with Brunel University also led the development of a health impact model showing how the pathway could save the Jordanian healthcare system money as well as saving lives.

The pilot care pathway itself was successfully completed in September 2009, leading to a publication currently under review and a series of presentations in international academic and policy conferences. It has since been endorsed by the Jordanian Minister for Health and an implementation plan is under development. Jordanian policy makers, pleased with the success of the pilot project, are now considering how a NICE-style HTA organisation could be set up in Jordan and are seeking funding from international donor organisations to strengthen HTA institutional capacity in Jordan.

Dr Lama Al Hmoud, Chair of the Guideline Development Group and a practicing pharmacist and policy maker in Jordan said:

“Having transparent national Standard Treatment Guidelines and making them mandatory within a public health system is a major way to ensure that healthcare



treatment options provided to populations are the best and most appropriate that the country can afford, which will ultimately improve availability and access to medicines.

A major success was achieved in developing an Essential Hypertension STG, based on the best available evidence adapted for the Jordanian setting, with technical help from UK NICE.

“NICE involvement was of benefit in two areas of strategic importance for improving the transparency of the way our healthcare system functions: Firstly, evidence informed recommendation for best practice in the selected priority area: pharmacological management of essential hypertension in primary care. And secondly, improved understanding (technical, procedural and policy related) and awareness (clinicians and policy makers) of the potential benefits of Jordanian guideline development.

“The past experience has clearly highlighted that the key challenge is implementation. This requires incentives by the MoH to adhere, as well as lots of dissemination workshops. Involving senior clinicians from the various public institutions in the development and refinement of the essential hypertension STG was a crucial step to ensure their ‘buy in’ and leadership in helping convince their peers of the benefits of implementing STGs. We are working now to develop an implementation strategy to stimulate the acceptance and use of the STG by health providers in the public sector. In addition, measurable indicators will be set prior to and after the use of the STG to assess impact on availability of medicines for essential hypertension.”

The project was showcased at the MeTA Global Forum in summer 2010 in London:
http://www.medicinestransparency.org/fileadmin/uploads/Documents/Global_Forum/Global_Forum_-_case_studies/MeTA_Jordan_-_Standard_Treatment_Guidelines.pdf