

CGA/18/36 - A cluster randomised pilot study of prescribing policy

This grant is to support the EVIDENCE (Evaluating Diuretics in Usual Care) pilot study in gathering information to support an application to NIHR to fund a substantive clinical trial using a new methodology. The EVIDENCE trial will use a pragmatic and efficient method to compare the safety and effectiveness of two similar blood pressure medications already in use within the NHS. Within the trial, GP practices will be randomly assigned to a policy of prescribing one or other of the medicines. Doctors will then use that policy when making prescribing decisions with patients who need treatment. Where clinically appropriate, existing long-term repeat prescriptions will also be altered in line with the policy. The study will use routinely collected NHS data to determine which of the medicines is best for treating high blood pressure. We anticipate that the EVIDENCE trial methodology may be used in future to compare a range of medicines in common use for which there is not yet enough good evidence to guide treatment decisions. Before seeking funding for a substantive trial, the following evidence gaps need to be addressed:

- Alternative electronic GP systems. Two main systems are currently used in Scotland: VISION and EMIS. The EVIDENCE methodology has to date only been tested in VISION practices only.
- Remote and Rural – the study methodology is designed so that it can be implemented in remote practices. This is still to be tested
- Stakeholder acceptability – as this is a new method, it will be important to gauge how the study has been experienced by participating practice staff and patients
- Public involvement – the EVIDENCE methodology is designed to offer a mechanism for comparative effectiveness research to be done as a part of normal NHS activity. The NHS is a public health service and it is therefore important that such novel projects are implemented in a way that is informed by the views of the wider public