

**Scientific and Clinical Advances Group
and
Ethics and Law Committee**

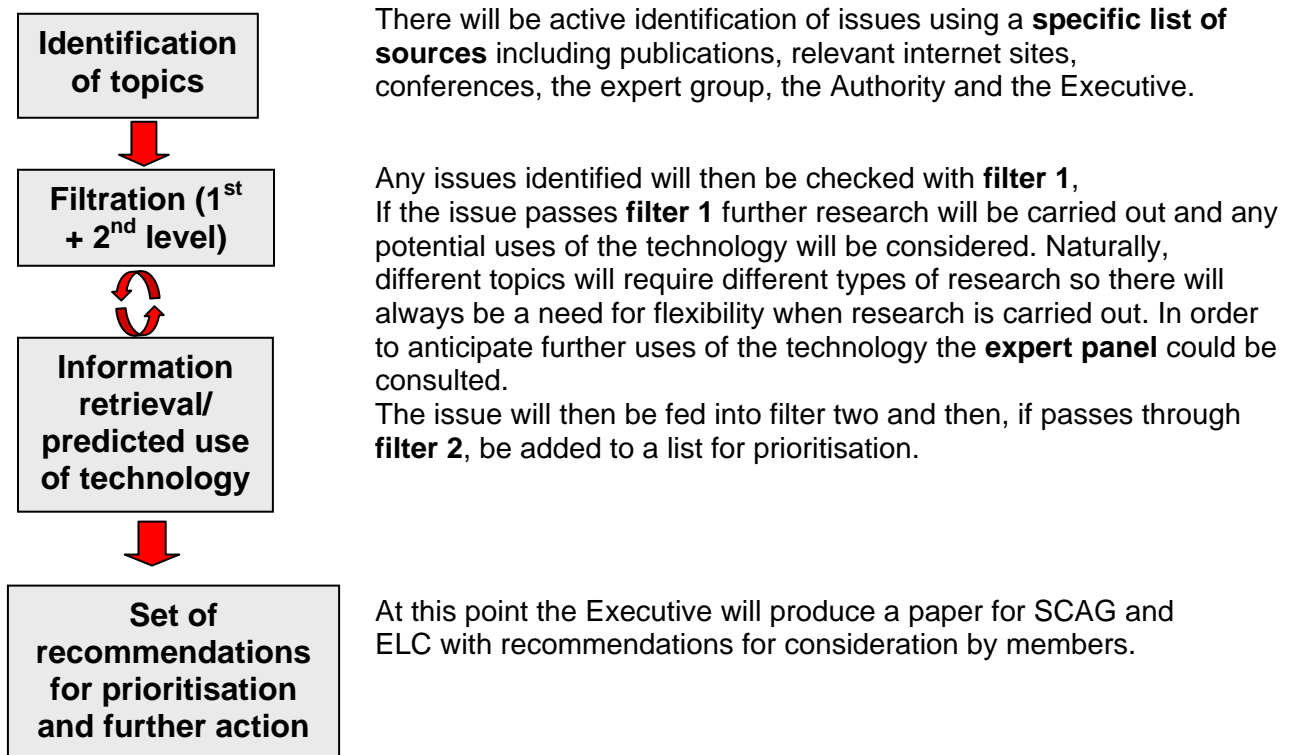
Horizon scanning methodology

Committee:	Scientific and Clinical Advances Group
Meeting Date:	15 December 2004
Agenda Item:	9
Paper Number:	SCAG/ELC (12/04)01
Paper Title:	Horizon scanning methodology
Author:	Katy Berry
For Information or Decision?	Decision
Recommendation to the Committee:	Members are asked to approve the horizon scanning methodology put forward and make any suggestions for additional criteria in the filters and research stage of the horizon scanning process.

Background

1. In order to ensure that the Authority are kept up to date with new developments that could impact on ART, a horizon scanning function is being developed. To date, an international panel of experts, consisting of clinicians, embryologists, animal model researchers and stem cell scientists have been brought together to advise the Authority. We are also strengthening the capacity of the policy team to identify key issues through scanning of journals and attending key conferences. To complete the process, an efficient and robust method is needed to filter and prioritise the information we gather. We developed a strategy based on the experience of the National Horizon Scanning Centre in Birmingham who carry out horizon scanning work for the Department of Health and National Institute of Clinical Excellence. The resulting methodology is outlined below.

2. Overview of the horizon scanning process



3. Identifying new issues on the ART horizon

Expert panel: Any issues suggested by the expert panel

List of journals: We are currently reviewing journal subscription and any recommendations from members would be welcome. The following journals have been identified to date: British Medical Journal, Fertility and Sterility, Nature, New Scientist, Human Reproduction, Human Reproduction Update, Molecular Human Reproduction, Reproduction, NEMJ, Reproductive Biomedicine On-line, The Lancet, Zygote, Genes and Development, Development, Developmental Cell.

List of websites: Bio News, The British Fertility Society- news page,

Conferences: ASRM and ESHRE conferences and feedback from any Authority member who identify any issues at conferences they have attended.

HFEA horizon scanning filter one

4. The initial filter will be broad and inclusive and will aim to capture as many issues as possible that may impact on the future of ART.

HFEA horizon scanning filter 1

Include if

- New and emerging technology
- Something that could have impact on ART
- Something that if introduced could require policy review
- Something that would need to go to the Authority or SCAG for a decision
- Any research on human embryos
- Any research on gametes
- Any research on genetic screening

Exclude if

- Drugs
- If illegal in the UK

Area of relevance

- High media interest
- Multiple quality sources
- Something that the Authority should be made aware of

Information retrieval/research:

5. This would have to remain relatively flexible depending on the specific topic in question. Rather than working through a list of further sources, it may be beneficial to answer a set of questions about the technique/ development. To obtain the information to answer the questions several relevant information sets could be accessed (literature, expert panel, members of the Authority, legal advice).

Questions to answer from the initial research

- Is the technique applicable to humans?
- What are the forecasted applications for this technique?
- What further developments would be needed to be used to introduce the technique as a treatment?
- Are the Act and current policies equipped to deal with the issue if it were to be used in treatment?
- Is it technically/scientifically possible to use the technique for a treatment?
- On what time scale is it likely to have an impact?

Questions to answer from the initial research... continued

- What is the patient group that this technique will affect?
- Is this technique carried out in other countries?
- Would it be feasible to carry out the technique in a clinic?
- Will the technique be used for research or treatment?
- Would the treatment be for infertility or genetic treatment?
- Would the technique require a policy review?

HFEA horizon scanning filter two

6. This filter would aim to remove topics that, following some initial research, would not be of interest to the Authority.

Horizon scanning filter 2Include if

- The technique is transferable to humans and could be used in treatment or research
- There will be/has been press interest/ public concern
- The diffusion of the technique would be rapid
- An expert/ authority member considers it is of concern
- There is likely to be ethical or legal considerations
- It is within the remit of the Act or it 'should' be

Exclude if

- The research is based on gametes and the gametes would never be used for treatment

7. The filtering process and initial research stage will remain flexible and adaptable. If, for example, it becomes apparent that the filters are excluding issues that should be considered or including those that are not important, the filters will be modified accordingly. The filtering process will be continually monitored and adapted as needed and after 6 months if the filters have changed significantly the modified filters will be presented to SCAG for consideration.

Prioritisation of issues/ further work

8. Issue identified by the HHSEP, the Executive and Members will be filtered and researched by the executive who will then produce a paper and

recommendations for prioritisation and suggestions for further action for the consideration of SCAG and ELC.

Decisions

9. Members are asked
 - to make any suggestions to improve the filters or research process
 - approve the horizon scanning methodology