



# **National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence**

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Diego Palacio Bentancourt  
Ministro de la Proteccion Social  
Carrera 13 No. 32 -72 Piso 12  
Bogota  
República de Colombia

London, 30 January 2009

Minister,

I would like to thank you for your hospitality during my recent visits to Bogota, in December 2008 and January 2009.

I am very pleased with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between our institutions that took place during my January visit. I am convinced this agreement will promote joint working between the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and your Ministry, with a focus on building the structures and processes for making procedurally fair resource allocation decisions in the Colombian setting.

The redesign and updating of a benefits package within the resource and time constraints you are facing is an unprecedented endeavour requiring careful planning. NICE and I personally would be delighted to support you in this difficult task, to the best of our abilities.

Colombia is not unique in facing the challenge of prioritising health care services; policy-makers around the world have to make choices when allocating resources, as resources are necessarily finite.

Based on our experience, procedural fairness, transparency and inclusiveness are of crucial importance when making such resource allocation decisions. These three conditions are as significant as the technical expertise required to inform the synthesis and interpretation of the evidence, as they help ensure the legitimacy of the resulting decisions. While scientific judgements on how to redesign and update the benefits package may be made within relatively limited time, instituting a fair, transparent and inclusive process that will ensure social value judgements also influence the decisions, is likely to be a much more time consuming exercise.

I wish you the best of success in the development of a unified benefits package. In the years to come, my colleagues and I sincerely hope to contribute to these efforts, drawing on our experience in the UK setting.

Sincerely,

Prof Sir Michael Rawlins, Chairman