

For further information, contact:

Helen Disney on +44 207 354 8888 or Meir Pugatch: meir@stockholm-network.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Government must re-assess patient access schemes before making NICE redundant, says new think tank report

The news that NICE will no longer deny patients access to new medicines is a welcome move away from centralised rationing, according to the Stockholm Network, a pro-market think tank. Launching a new paper on patient access schemes, the system that looks set to replace NICE, Director Helen Disney commented: “Even at a time of austerity, the British public does not want or accept rationed healthcare. But it would be a shame if the NICE experiment was replaced by an equally unpredictable and misguided means of allocating resources”.

Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, has proposed using risk-sharing agreements between pharmaceutical companies and the NHS which offer “no win, no fee” mechanisms, as the basis for extending access to medicines. However, new research by the Stockholm Network which examines 27 risk-sharing schemes already in operation in various countries shows that they are still very much in their infancy and should not form the basis for more widespread use in the NHS.

The new report, *Sharing the Burden*, shows that the results of risk-sharing schemes are too varied to be relied upon and that, in most instances, such schemes have been used as a fig-leaf for imposing price cuts rather than for widening access or increasing innovation. The Stockholm Network calls on the coalition government to heed the following recommendations as they design the value-based pricing agreement due to come into effect in 2013:

- When drugs are rejected for reimbursement, a risk-sharing scheme can act as a band-aid over the damage, yet this is not a sustainable system for the future.
- An effective risk-sharing agreement must understand the specific reasons for including, or not including, a certain drug for reimbursement.
- Risk-sharing schemes need to adequately address both price and performance concerns. Current examples suggest that risk-sharing agreements aim to control costs rather than to deal genuinely with the issue of risk.
- Risk-sharing agreements are a means to an end. If the intention is greater access to the best available treatments within finite budgets then risk-sharing should be considered as part of a wide range of policies aimed at serving this objective including health system reform.

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Notes to Editors:

Helen Disney is the CEO and Founder of the Stockholm Network, a pan-European think tank based in London and founded in 1997.

The new Stockholm Network report into risk-sharing schemes, *Sharing the Burden*, is available at: http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/Sharing_the_Burden.pdf

Information on the Stockholm Network health technology assessment programme can also be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/snhta>