



**National Institute for
Health and Clinical Excellence**

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Dear Mr Reed

Thank you for your letter of 20 November regarding the concerns of your constituent about the Institute's appraisal of abatacept (Orencia) for the treatment of refractory rheumatoid arthritis.

NICE was asked by the Department of Health to assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of abatacept (Orencia) for the treatment of refractory rheumatoid arthritis, further details of which can be found at <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=byID&o=11720>. The Final Appraisal Determination (FAD), which constitutes the Institute's final draft guidance, was published on 26 October 2007. The process that we follow allows stakeholders to appeal, if they wish. An appeal has been arranged, further details of which will be available at the web address above when they become available.

In the absence of NICE guidance, local prescribing arrangements are followed. There is no ban on the prescribing of treatments that have not been assessed by NICE, and the Department of Health has made it clear that it is not acceptable for trusts to use the absence of NICE guidance as an excuse not to prescribe.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Dillon
Chief Executive