

1. Method

Quality and confidentiality

A number of predetermined key fields on each questionnaire had been set to ensure that data analysis could be performed effectively. If these key fields were not completed on receipt of the questionnaire by NCEPOD, the NCEPOD local reporter or clinician was contacted to see if the data could be obtained.

Once the questionnaire was as complete as possible, the identifying casenote number on each questionnaire was entered into an encryption programme that generated a new unique number for each patient that was not linked to a hospital. The original casenote number was then removed from the questionnaire, along with any identifiable information relevant to the patient or clinician.

The data from all questionnaires received were electronically scanned into a preset database. Prior to any analysis taking place, the data were cleaned to ensure that there were no duplicate records and that erroneous data had not been entered during scanning. Any fields that contained spurious data that could not be validated were removed.