CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES

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WHY ASSESS GUIDELINES?

- A guideline is a form of intervention.
- It can potentially affect a lot of patients.
- Users need to have confidence in recommendations.
- Professional and governmental agencies have to ensure guidelines are ‘good’ before recommending them.
WHAT IS A ‘GOOD’ GUIDELINE?

A ‘good’ guideline is one that leads to improved outcomes for patients.

Needs to be based on evidence*

Needs to be used (implementation)*

Needs to be assessed

* Grimshaw & Russell, Lancet, 1993
BACKGROUND TO AGREE

*European work*

- Guidelines assessed in several European countries with different criteria.
- Appraisal instrument developed and validated in the UK.
- Instrument used to assess all guidelines funded through the NHS Programme to help decide which guidelines to recommend in practice.
APPRAISAL PROCESS

Guidelines received

Appraisers recruited

Appraisal

Report

NHS Executive

Guideline authors

Appraisers

12 weeks
Mean dimension scores of NHS-commissioned guidelines and national guidelines from the main study.
OUTCOME FROM UK WORK

- Appraisal Instrument used in:
  - Canada (Ontario Medical Association)
  - France (FNCLCC)
  - Germany (Guidelines Clearinghouse)

- Application to EU BIOMED Programme
  - Funding received for 3 years
Francoise Cluzeau:
The AGREE Collaboration

The AGREE Collaboration

Basque Office HTA
Fundacio Biblioteca Josep Laporte

USA
Canada
New Zealand
WHY AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION?

- Clinical guidelines play an increasingly important role in healthcare practice in most countries.
- Ensuring their quality is a shared concern.
- There is a need for international guidance on guideline development.
- ‘The whole is greater that the sum of its parts’. 
OBJECTIVES

- Develop compatible approaches for the creation of clinical guidelines.
- Establish a structure for the appraisal and monitoring of Clinical guidelines.
- Define quality criteria relevant to guidelines.
- Promote and encourage the diffusion of these criteria through international exchanges and collaborative links.
INTEGRATED RESEARCH PROGRAMME

1. Create an international instrument to appraise the quality of clinical guidelines.
2. Formulate guidance for guideline developers.
3. Describe and compare guideline development programmes.
4. Undertake content analysis of appraised guidelines.
PURPOSE OF THE AGREE INSTRUMENT

- To provide a systematic framework for appraising the quality of Clinical guidelines.
- To assess local, regional, national or international guidelines.
- Can be applied to guidelines in any disease area.
- Can be used by: policy makers, guideline users, guideline developers, educators.
‘Quality of clinical practice guidelines’ is the confidence that:

1. the potential biases of guideline development have been addressed adequately
2. the recommendations are both internally and externally valid, and are feasible for practice.

- AGREE Instrument assesses quality of reporting, and quality of some aspects of recommendations.
- Provides an assessment of the predicted validity of a guideline (that it will achieve its intended outcome).
Development Process

- Subgroup reviews literature
- First draft circulated for comments
- First workshop, instrument modified
- First validation study
- Second workshop, Instrument revised
- Final validation study
**STRUCTURE**

**Domains**

- 23 items
- 4-point Likert Scale

1. Scope & purpose (3)
2. Stakeholder involvement (4)
3. Rigour of development (7)
4. Clarity & presentation (4)
5. Applicability (3)
6. Editorial independence (2)
VALIDATION PROCESS

**Phase 1**
- The instrument was applied to 100 guidelines from 11 countries.
- All countries followed the same protocol.
- Each guideline was independently assessed by 4 appraisers (194 altogether).
- Instrument was used in English.

**Phase 2**
- Refined instrument tested on 33 guidelines randomly selected from 1st study.
- Same countries participated.
- New set of appraisers recruited (70)
- Each country assessed 3 guidelines
# Reliability

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Cronbach $\alpha$</th>
<th>ICC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Scope &amp; purpose</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.78</td>
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<td>3. Rigour of development</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<td>4. Clarity &amp; presentation</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>.57</td>
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<td>5. Applicability</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<td>6. Editorial independence</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>.67</td>
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## GUIDELINES DOMAIN SCORES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope &amp; purpose</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.7 – 97.2</td>
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<td>Stakeholder</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>4.2 – 68.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rigour of development</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>0.0 – 89.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>37.5 – 91.2</td>
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<td>Applicability</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>0.0 – 91.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial independence</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>0.0 – 72.2</td>
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CONCLUSIONS

• AGREE is the first appraisal instrument for clinical guidelines to be developed and tested internationally.

• It can be used consistently by a wide range of professionals from different cultural backgrounds.

• It has satisfactory reliability.

• There is some suggestion of validity.
OUTCOMES

◆ AGREE has been translated into 7 European languages + Chinese, Japanese and Russian.

◆ It is used by several professional & governmental agencies as a template to develop their national guidelines.

◆ All EU-funded projects requested to assess guidelines with AGREE.

◆ The Council of Europe refers to the instrument in their recommendations.

◆ WHO has endorsed it.
The AGREE Instrument creates a common framework for assessing guidelines that can be applied internationally.

Can be used to compare quality of guidelines across countries and disease areas.

Provides standards for reporting of clinical guidelines published in medical journals.

Governmental agencies will want to use AGREE to judge the quality of national guidelines and to make policy decisions.
WHAT NEXT?

Dissemination

- Publications, monographs and conferences.
- Meeting with guideline developers, policy makers and researchers in June 2002.

Future projects and proposals

- Establish an international guideline network.
- Proposal to the 6th EU Framework Programme.
Website address

Http://www. Agreecollaboration.org