

European Society for Vascular Surgery Clinical Practice Guideline Development Scheme: An Overview of Evidence Quality Assessment Methods, Evidence to Decision Frameworks, and Reporting Standards in Guideline Development

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OBJECTIVE

A structured and transparent approach is instrumental in translating research evidence to health recommendations and evidence informed clinical decisions. The aim was to conduct an overview and analysis of principles and methodologies for health guideline development.

METHODS

A literature review on methodologies, strategies, and fundamental steps in the process of guideline development was performed. The clinical practice guideline development process and methodology adopted by the European Society for Vascular Surgery are also presented.

RESULTS

Sophisticated methodologies for health guideline development are being applied increasingly by national and international organisations. Their overarching principle is a systematic, structured, transparent, and iterative process that is aimed at making well informed healthcare choices. Critical steps in guideline development include the assessment of the certainty of the body of evidence; evidence to decision frameworks; and guideline reporting. The goal of strength of evidence assessments is to provide well reasoned judgements about the guideline developers' confidence in study findings, and several evidence hierarchy schemes and evidence rating systems have been described for this purpose. Evidence to decision frameworks help guideline developers and users conceptualise and interpret the construct of the quality of the body of evidence. The most widely used evidence to decision frameworks are those developed by the GRADE Working Group and the WHO-INTEGRATE, and are structured into three distinct components: background; assessment; and conclusions. Health guideline reporting tools are employed to ensure

methodological rigour and transparency in guideline development. Such reporting instruments include the AGREE II and RIGHT, with the former being used for guideline development and appraisal, as well as reporting.

CONCLUSION

This guide will help guideline developers/expert panels enhance their methodology, and patients/clinicians/policymakers interpret guideline recommendations and put them in context. This document may be a useful methodological summary for health guideline development by other societies and organisations.

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