

Reviewer's report

Title: Development of evidence-based clinical practice guidelines (CPGs): comparing approaches.

Version: 1 **Date:** 29 February 2008

Reviewer: Atle Fretheim

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses a relevant issue: To what extent do handbooks for clinical practice guideline development agree in their recommendations?

The authors have made a reasonably thorough search for such documents - the only limitation that I might be critical to is that they have excluded non-English handbooks. They have used appropriate and sound methods when assessing the documents they found, and they provide a well formulated, easy-accessible presentation and discussion of their findings. All-in-all this is a well-prepared report that was clear and easy to read. Thank you!

This is a report of a fairly modest research effort in terms of invested time, I would think. However, I believe the findings are important and/or interesting enough to warrant publication. And I guess invested time is not a criterion when assessing whether papers should be published or not (this is up to the Implementation Science editors to consider, of course).

I have only three points on which I suggest that authors consider revising:

1. As a rule of thumb: All papers should, in my opinion, discuss possible "study-limitations" in the Discussion-section. You, the authors, are best placed to reflect over this. One specific issue you should discuss is that you have excluded non-English documents. E.g. in Finland the Duodecim-group is considered world-leading in evidence-based CPG publishing. I would expect them to have a guideline for guidelines.

1. It is a bit strange that you refer to six handbooks in you Introduction-section - all of which were, reportedly, identified through your search for such handbooks. If so, the handbooks should, logically, be introduced in the Results-section. I read the current reporting to mean that you were aware of all six handbooks before you started searching. I am not sure what the best way of dealing with this is within the standard format of a scientific paper. Transparency is always good - perhaps you could simply state that your search did not yield any handbooks that you were not already aware of (if this was the case)?

2. At the very end of the Results-section you address "Evaluation, Revision and Updates". You briefly describe your findings with regards to the "What-to"-aspect of this. However, I expect that few, if any, of the handbooks provide much "How-to"-information e.g. on evaluating the impact of CPGs. I miss your reporting of this aspect here.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached): None.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct): See comments above.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore): No specific ones.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.