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How HAS develops audit support: the stroke experience

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Background: Audit support is one of the tools used to implement guidelines. With its ready-to-use list of criteria, audit supports allow physicians to assess and improve their clinical practice individually or collectively. They can also be used in accreditation of healthcare organisations or in the development of reminders.

Purpose: Presenting and illustrating through an experience the HAS method to develop audit criteria.

Methods: Detailing the steps for producing an audit support developed from the HAS clinical practice guideline (CPG) on vascular prevention after an ischemic stroke or transient ischemic attack.

Results: Some members of the Guideline Development Group of the aforementioned HAS CPG volunteered to participate in the Working Group (WG) in charge of the development of an audit support. During a 1-day meeting, the members of the WG selected the recommendations deemed as major to improve clinical practice. A criterion was proposed for each selected recommendation, as well as the justification of that choice and how to use it. Then, audit criteria were sent to a Testing Group (TG) composed of 10 physicians who tested their acceptability and feasibility and gave their feedback. From the comments of the TG members, the WG tailored the criteria during another 1-day meeting. In order to be more efficient and applicable, some criteria had to be cut in 2 or 3 criteria. A total of 28 criteria were created from 21 recommendations. The whole process lasted 4 months.

Discussion: The audit support is a fast-to-be-made tool for implementing guidelines. Audit criteria can be used wholly or partly, electronically or in an old-fashioned way (paper), and be part of an accreditation process or integrated in the development of reminders.