
Title:

Evidence and recommendation grading in guidelines: a short history

Abstract

Hierarchies of evidence and grading of recommendations are widely accepted as prerequisites for developing evidence-based clinical guidelines. This notion has been driven by a need to protect the internal validity of the recommendations and to ensure they will lead to the desired outcomes. Hierarchies can provide a helpful summary of the quality of the evidence and the strength of recommendations for busy clinicians. Overtime they have helped raise awareness that some forms of evidence are more trustworthy than others. However, the profusion of these hierarchies, simplification in their design and interpretation, as well as their indiscriminate application has led to confusion amongst guideline developers and users. Some argue that hierarchies of evidence are oversimplified frameworks and some even question whether they are needed at all. This presentation examines the evolution of conventional evidence hierarchies over the past twenty years leading to the development of the GRADE approach. It provides a critical analysis of their designs and highlights their merits and flaws using examples from recently developed guidelines from major guideline programmes as illustrations.

About the presenter

Françoise Cluzeau, BA, MSc, PhD is a Senior Adviser at NICE International where she is responsible for designing and delivering on guidelines and HTA projects with client countries. For six years she was a technical advisor to the NICE guidelines Programme with responsibility for the guidelines manual. She led the AGREE collaboration and she is the chair of the AGREE Research trust (ART). She is a member of the GRADE Group and of the G-I-N Advisory Group. She holds a lectureship at St George's University of London.