

**PL002**

**PROGRESS IN EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE: A QUARTER CENTURY ON –  
FOCUSSING ON THE ROLE OF GUIDELINES IN EBM**

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This talk deals with three issues: challenges in including patients in guideline panels, dealing with conflict of interest, and challenges in applying GRADE.

Challenges in including patients in guideline panels include: i) difficulty recruiting individual representative of the population of interest, in particular disadvantaged populations; ii) educating patients so that they develop a sophisticated understanding of the evidence; and iii) ensuring they play an optimal role in the panel deliberations. Experience to date provides some guidance in dealing with these challenges.

Dealing with conflict of interest remains a vexing problem for guideline panels. Essentially, the problem is two fold. First, a tension between ensuring that conflicts do not influence recommendations, and ensuring optimal input for those with the most sophisticated understanding of the issues and the deepest expertise. Second, dealing with both financial and non-financial conflicts. Approaches include i) the complete exclusion of anyone with either a financial or non-financial conflict of interest; ii) the selective recusal of individuals with conflicts for particular recommendations; iii) formulation of a standard of more and less serious conflicts, with exclusion of only the latter; and iv) complete exclusion of those with conflicts, but provision for input through conversations with panel members.

Challenges in applying GRADE include whether or not to address all the elements identified in the GRADE evidence to decision framework that includes magnitude of benefits and harms; certainty of the evidence; values and preferences; costs; equity; feasibility; and acceptability. Other issues include ensuring insuring clarity of perspective (individual, population, or public health) and deciding on what it is, exactly, in which one is rating one's certainty. There are no generalizable right answers to any of these issues, but acknowledgement of the issues and careful consideration in the context can lead to the right decisions in the context of particular guidelines.