

Currency of guidelines

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Tabriz, April 2012

Currency

refers to the validity and accuracy of the guideline's recommendations in relation to the most current evidence

Updating and Replacing Guidelines

- Currency and guideline replacement is an evolving field
- Updating a guideline requires access to the original review questions, search strategies and evidence tables
- Replacing a guideline may involve developing new scope, review questions and search strategies
- The ultimate decision to update or review a guideline will be made by the original commissioning body

Updating guidelines

- specific sections of a guideline and the associated recommendations are updated based on the latest evidence
- this only occurs where the review questions and format do not change from the previous guideline version to the new one, and
- where complete search strategies and evidence tables are available to update

Replacing guidelines

- an existing guideline is replaced with an entirely new guideline, with brand new review questions and associated search strategies

Assessing Currency

- While some guideline agencies mark their guidelines for specific scheduled reviews, setting an update period can lead to revisions that are either too early or too late depending on how quickly the evidence base has evolved.
- Currently NZGG schedules the assessment of currency of guidelines five years after initial publication. The process involves a combination of approaching an expert panel, combined with targeted searching for significant new high quality guidelines.

**As each guideline reaches five years
of age the following occurs:**

Chair of GDT is sent a checklist listing all recommendations & asked to identify for each set of recommendations:

- any new evidence or developments in the field relevant to the guideline recommendation, and if so, whether the new evidence or development is of sufficient importance to invalidate the guideline recommendation
- whether there are new guideline recommendations (within the boundaries of the original guideline) that should be present

Following the currency assessment the guideline is classified as :

- Current
- withdrawn
- recommended for update (usually of only selected areas)
- recommended for review (entire guideline recommended for development as a 'start from scratch').

Withdrawing a guideline

A guideline may be withdrawn for one or more of three broad reasons:

1. it has been superseded by a more recent or more comprehensive guideline
2. evidence that the guideline is fully complied with and has become accepted practice
3. emergence of new treatments or preventative measures that render the guideline irrelevant/incorrect and no longer a priority for funding of updates.

Consistency of guidelines

Even when the evidence is clear-cut and consistent; guidelines often differ due to:

- Resource implications
- Influential GDT members
- Non-transparent processes
- Lack of explicit decision algorithms