Reviewer's report

Title: Improving the Use of Research Evidence in Guideline Development: 3. Group Composition

Version: Date: 1 May 2006

Reviewer: Francoise Cluzeau

Reviewer's report:

General

This paper is fairly general and addresses predominantly the composition of guidelines development group. This is an important factor in the development of guidelines but there are some key areas that are of equal importance, for example group working processes/functioning. These can have a significant impact on final recommendations. It would be helpful if this topic was covered in one of the other 16 reviews mentioned in the abstract to ensure that the background advice to WHO is comprehensive.

The paper provides a competent review of the current literature on guidelines group composition and it is clearly written. However it stops short of exploring some more contentious issues about what types of guidelines groups should develop guidelines (e.g. standing groups versus ad-hoc groups). There is little literature on this particular subject but raising it would have strengthen the paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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

Abstract: 6-13th bullet points. "What methods should WHO use to ensure appropriate consultations?" I would argue that these points are not related to the composition of the guidelines group. They are about consulting on the draft guideline that the guideline group have developed. I am not sure they are relevant in the context of this paper

Background:

- Third paragraph: This suggests that WHO does not follow its own 'guidelines for guidelines'. If this paper is designed to advise WHO is there any reason to believe that WHO will take any notice of it?

- Fourth paragraph. "Broad consultations". This should be more clearly defined. Consultation with which groups? How could this be done?
- Fourth paragraph. The last sentence is about consultation of the guideline. Is this relevant to this paper?

- "What other organisations are doing". First paragraph, first sentence: "In a recent international survey...and consumers". The reference is missing from the text. Presumably this is reference [4].

- "What other organisations are doing". Second paragraph. 3rd sentence. "this person has a crucial role...group process". This statement should be referenced.

- "What other organisations are doing". Third paragraph. NICE guideline development groups may occasionally include experts. Suggest the sentence is toned down to "(NICE) in the UK usually does not include experts.."

- "What other organisations are doing". Third paragraph, last sentence. " it was concluded the NICE is an " internationally a .. ". Delete " an".

Discussion: First sentence. Given the paucity of empirical evidence on the effect of guidelines group composition on the final product the conclusion that there is "sufficient evidence to conclude" is rather overstated. Suggest change to "there is sufficient evidence to suggest"

Discussion: Second paragraph. Third sentence. Should be referenced

References:


11. I have been unable to find this reference in Health Res Policy Syst

13. I have been unable to find this reference in Health Res Policy Syst

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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