Reviewer’s report

Title: Systematic Review of Clinical Practice Guidelines in the Diagnosis and Management of Thyroid Nodules and Cancer

Version: 2 Date: 25 June 2013

Reviewer: Lillian Sung

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript provides a review of clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) related to the diagnosis and management of thyroid nodules and cancer. The idea of the review is important and timely. However, I do have some major comments.

1. The major comment relates to inconsistency throughout the manuscript on what is being evaluated. In the Abstract and Results, the evaluation of all 6 AGREE-II domains are listed and the evaluation relates to >50% score in all 6 AGREE-II domains. However, the Methods, in the first paragraph under “Guideline quality assessment” describe evaluation of 6 of the 8 “Rigour in Development” elements although how these 6 were chosen is not clear. Further, there is no separate description of the Rigour scores – it looks like 6/10 CPGs scored > 50% in the Rigour domain.

2. Eligibility criteria are not clear. One inclusion criterion was “developed on behalf of a national or international medical specialty”. I am not clear why this should be an eligibility criterion. I believe that non-English articles were excluded but this is not stated within eligibility. Further, the definition of a CPG is not clearly stated. Shouldn’t older CPGs be excluded (i.e. > 5 years) since they should no longer be used?

3. It looks like only one person screened but this is not clear. There is no mention of agreement in terms of inclusion/exclusion or in abstraction of AGREE-II elements.

4. I disagree with one of the final recommendations from the authors. The authors suggest that clinicians should be more concerned about the “applicability” domain. Rather, I believe that clinicians should really focus on “rigour” since that is what the CPG recommendations should hinge upon. Applicability elements such as costs, barriers at the local institution and tools for implementation can also be handled by individual sites if they are missing from the CPG.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

I declare that I have no competing interest