Reviewer’s report

Title: Guideline-based quality indicators – a systematic comparison of German and international clinical practice guidelines

Version: 0 Date: 06 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Jako Burgers

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written and well-structured paper describing and comparing quality indicators (QIs) from Germany and other countries (Belgium, Canada, US, UK) derived from evidence-based clinical practice guidelines (CPGs). This study is part of a German project on methods of translating guideline recommendations into QIs, which is also useful for the international audience.

The objective of this study was to compare guideline-based QIs identified in German CPGs, as well as their underlying methodological approaches, with those of international CPGs on related topics. Many relevant data on CPGs and QIs were collected, presented, and compared using descriptive statistics. Although hypotheses were suggested, these were not statistically tested.

One major comment is that the authors collected CPGs on same topics and then directly compared the QIs of CPG pairs. The step of identifying the individual recommendations within the CPGs and assessing their comparability was skipped. Not surprisingly, most of the QIs (83%) were not comparable as the individual underlying recommendations were not comparable. For comparing QIs, the individual recommendations should be distracted from the CPGs first and then the QIs can be compared. The authors should acknowledge this in the Discussion section. This will not affect the conclusion that information on the methodological approach of developing QIs is often lacking.

One minor comment is that reflection on the quality appraisal scores of the CPGs is missing. The domain scores vary from 48 to 83%. Did the authors consider to use a threshold, for instance excluding CPGs with a score lower than 50 or 60% arguing that those are less evidence-based? And is a high scoring CPG related to better description of the methods of developing the QIs?
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Acceptable

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