

DECIDING WHICH GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATIONS TO TACKLE FIRST

Factors to consider when deciding where to focus your efforts.

Evidence

- strength of research evidence from well designed studies/systematic reviews, straightforward and not conflicting

Current practice

- degree of deviation of current practice from evidence

Attributes of guideline recommendation

- clarity (recommendation described concretely and precisely as opposed to vague and non-specific)
- central or key (recommendation is a key feature or central to the whole guideline or set of recommendations)
- complexity (many different elements; complex decision tree; many different conditional factors)
- high profile (recommendation has been mentioned in the media or has a high profile in education programs)

Implementation considerations

- requires organisational change in care processes or needs additional staff, equipment, infrastructure
- trialable (can the change be piloted tested/tried out on a limited basis?)
- observable (can the results/benefits of the changes been seen quickly/readily?)

Patient considerations

- compatibility with patient expectations

Clinician considerations

- importance of the issue/solves clinical problems/relative advantage
- compatible with current norms and values
- requires change to existing routines and habits
- requires new knowledge and skills

Cost implications

- Costs involved, including time

Attributes of guideline recommendations that may affect adoption

Importance of the issue:⁽¹⁻³⁾ important to clinicians; helps solve problems in clinical practice/close gaps; relative advantage of new care process

Precisely described:^(1, 3) provides a sufficiently detailed and precise guide to clinical practice

Compatible:^(1, 4) compatible with clinicians' current norms and values in practice

Key feature:^(1, 4) Essential to the whole set of recommendations and to the ultimate goals

Based upon sound evidence:⁽¹⁻⁴⁾ based upon sound scientific evidence including, as appropriate, clinical trials or meta-analyses

Fits patient expectations:^(1, 4, 5) is likely to fit in with patient expectations

Level 5 499 St Kilda Road Melbourne Victoria 3004 Australia

P: +61 3 8866 0400 F: +61 3 8866 0499 E: INFO@NICSL.COM.AU W: WWW.NICSL.COM.AU

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Observable:⁽⁴⁻⁶⁾ the benefits of using this practice or policy over existing practices or policies can be seen quickly

Requires organizational change:^(1, 4, 5) requires changes in the way care is organized or additional resources

Requires changed routines:^(1, 3-5) requires changes to fixed routines or habits

High profile:^(1, 4) has a high profile in educational programs or the media

Complex:^(1, 6) is complex and requires many steps to do or organize

Triable:^(1, 6) can be tried out and discarded easily

Requires new knowledge or skills:^(1, 5) requires the learning of new knowledge or skills

Cost effectiveness⁽⁷⁾

References

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Further reading

Patient and evidence considerations:

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Gaps between evidence and practice:

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Clarity of guideline recommendations:

Michie S, Johnston M. Changing clinical behaviour by making guidelines specific. *BMJ*. 2004 Feb 7;328(7435):343-5.

Prepared for NICS by Ruth Cornish, Implementation Adviser, September 2006.

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