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Quality management for patient guidelines

Corinna Schaefer¹, Kirschning Silke¹, Lang Britta², Saenger Sylvia¹, Ollenschlaeger Guenter¹
¹Agency for Quality in Medicine, Berlin, Germany, ²German Cochrane Centre, Freiburg, Germany

Background: The quality of patient guidelines has a great influence on their implementation. Patient guidelines therefore have to meet high quality demands among which are – besides the observation of formal standards - evidence based recommendations, a consequent consideration of patient needs and comprehensibility.

Purpose: to present measures of quality management for patient guidelines

Methods: Measures of quality management for patient guidelines are : (1) Patient participation in the development process according to a defined methodology, (2) transfer of evidence based recommendations from clinical guidelines, (3) the provision of formal demands for good patient information, (4) the consideration of patient experiences, (5) a peer review by the experts of the clinical guidelines, (6) a three-month consultation period with a structured feedback system and (7) quality assessment after publication by an external institution (German Cochrane Centre) based on the quality criteria of the DISCERN instrument (www.discern.co.uk).

Results: According to the quality assessment of the German Cochrane Centre, all patient guidelines have been proven to be of high formal quality. The quality management measures developed for the National Diseases Management Patient Guidelines have been adopted by other guidelines programs in Germany (e.g. the national guidelines program for oncology). The defined demands on quality for patient guidelines furthermore provide a basis for a national standard of good patient information (good practice patient information).

Discussion: Feedback indicates that patient guidelines of high quality in form and content are more accepted by physicians and recommended to patients, thus making high quality patient guidelines an important implementation tool for clinical guidelines. Short versions of patient guidelines such as waiting room information leaflets may advance their implementation.