Challenges to developing guidelines for a public dental service

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Irish Context

- Oral Health targets for children not met
  - Variation in service delivery between dental service delivery areas
- Several DoH reports calling for guidelines for children’s dental services
Guideline Development

- Department of Health
  - Policy
  - Priorities
- Health Service Quality Initiatives
- Professional Organisations
Contextual challenge to guideline development

- Department of Health
  - Policy
  - Priorities
- Health Service Quality Initiatives
- Professional Organisations

“Improving quality in the health system requires implementation of internationally-recognised, evidence-based guidelines…”

Department of Health, 2001

- Lack of oral health leadership in DoH or Health Service Executive
- No culture of guideline development
National funding agency for health research

Strategic Health Research and Development Research Award
Irish Oral Health Services Guideline Initiative

- Oral Health Services Research Centre
  - Establish centre for systematic reviewing and guideline development

- Collaboration with
  - UK Cochrane Centre
  - Public dental service
Irish Oral Health Services Guideline Initiative

- Priority topics for guideline development:
  - Clinical practice (core procedures)
  - Service operational issues
Guideline Development Process

- AGREE Principles
- NICE & SIGN technical manuals
Process challenges to guideline development
Lack of experience

- Researchers
- GDG members
- Stakeholders
  - Unrealistic expectations
    - Time required
    - Evidence

Lesson

- Guideline Development will take longer
- Contact your Cochrane Group early in the process!
- Benefits to all involved
- Enthusiasm is important!
Lack of experience

Feedback
- Obtaining feedback
- Preference for verbal feedback

Lesson
- Use the telephone for GDG feedback
- Keep documentation for GDG and stakeholders as short as possible
- It takes time to establish your credentials as a guideline developer
Gulf between evidence and current practice
STRATEGIES TO PREVENT DENTAL CARIES IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Guidance on identifying high caries risk children and developing preventive strategies for high caries risk children in Ireland
Gulf between evidence and current practice

Evidence

6 mths

Current practice

7-8 yrs
## Implementation challenges

### Identification of high caries risk children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public health nurses should have training in the identification of high caries risk children</th>
<th>Grade of recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>An oral assessment should be incorporated into each child’s developmental visit…</td>
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Implementation challenges

Identification of high caries risk children

- No oral health component in Public Health Nurse (PHN) university course
- Limited and outdated training in oral health for PHNs in post

An oral assessment should be incorporated into each child’s developmental visit...
Gulf between evidence and practice

Lesson

- Stick with the evidence – change the system!
- Guideline becomes a *resource* for change rather than the instrument of change
- Enthusiasm is even more important!
Positive Impacts

- Raised profile of evidence-based practice
- Foundation for pilot caries prevention programme
- Contributed to successful grant application (addressing knowledge gaps)
In Conclusion
Thank you!