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Utilization of SAGES guidelines by its membership: Initial analysis.

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Background: The development and implementation of clinical practice guidelines offers many challenges. The Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) has been at the forefront of guidelines development for laparoscopic surgery since 1982 providing its membership with guidelines on the clinical application of procedures, new technologies, and credentialing.

Purpose: To assess patterns of utilization of SAGES guidelines by its membership.

Methods: An electronic survey of the SAGES membership (n=5207) was conducted via e-mail solicitation in August/2007. Members were asked if they utilized the guidelines, how often, for what purposes and when, and to rank the frequency of utilization and usefulness of each of its 26 guidelines. They were also asked to suggest topics for new guideline development and provide comments.

Results: Out of 239 SAGES members who completed the survey 121 (50%) utilized the guidelines. Most members (95%) accessed the guidelines on a monthly or less frequent basis and after hours (58%), or during work hours (52%), or while on call (9%). Reasons for guideline utilization included developing practice protocols (56%) and patient treatment paradigms (51%), creating education and training guidelines for staff privileges (35%), or credentialing new medical staff members (25%). The most often utilized and useful guidelines included clinical application guidelines on laparoscopic bariatric, antireflux, biliary, and colorectal surgery, as well as laparoscopic appendectomy and diagnostic laparoscopy. Some respondents indicated lack of knowledge about guideline existence and new guideline requests were made.

Discussion: The results of this survey provided valuable information about the patterns of utilization of the SAGES guidelines by its membership. The rather infrequent utilization of these guidelines highlights the need for interventions that aim at increasing the use and adoption of these guidelines. Such efforts are currently underway, and will be the subject of a follow-up study.