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Developing Criteria to Assess and Develop Guideline Implementability Tools

BACKGROUND
The Guideline Implementability Research and Application Network (GIRAnet) links guideline developers, implementers, and researchers to identify, develop, evaluate and share guideline implementability tools (GItools). This refers to information in or with guidelines that helps users to accommodate, implement, and evaluate use of the recommendations. We searched for existing GItools that will populate a searchable Internet directory to which others can contribute. The purpose of this initiative was to establish criteria to guide the assessment of GItool eligible for inclusion in the directory, and the creation of new GItools.

METHODS
An online survey was used to solicit input on criteria between July and September 2012. International guideline developers, implementers and researchers were invited to complete the survey by distributing an email notice and two-week reminder message through the Guidelines International Network, and several other organizations with a focus on evidence based practice. The survey asked respondents to rate their agreement with components of a GItool definition, and several criteria that were common across research reporting standards on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Respondents were also asked to provide comments. Response frequencies were calculated and comments were summarized.

RESULTS
A total of 98 guideline developers, implementers and researchers from 12 countries completed the survey.
GItool Definition
- Information that helps users to implement guidelines
- Located within or accompanying guidelines, or from another source
- Formatted or implemented in a variety of ways (ie. text, bullet lists, tables, templates, pocket cards, manuals, embedded in point-of-care tools, hand-held applications)
- May be generic and broadly applicable, or specific to a clinical indication or guideline
- Users may reflect a variety of health care levels, sectors and professionals

GItool Criteria
Required ("ideal", "comprehensive", "gold standard")
1. Objectives are stated
2. Target users are identified
3. Development is described
4. Evidence is cited that underpins tool design, development, or content

Desirable ("useful but not vital")
1. Quality of the underpinning evidence is described
2. Development informed by user input (ie. survey, focus groups)
3. Development involved pilot-testing to asses use and satisfaction (ie. interviews)
4. Once developed, full-scale evaluation used to evaluate effectiveness (ie. time series, controlled study)
5. Once implemented, feedback is gathered prospectively to improve GI tool, and monitor use and impact

IMPLICATIONS
This work represents the generation of items that will be used to more rigorously establish GItool criteria based on the modified Delphi technique. Those criteria will be field-tested for usability (ease of use given content and format), content validity (criteria are relevant), and reliability (application similar across different raters of the same GItool). Ultimately, criteria will be summarized in a GItool Assessment Kit including definitions, examples, instructions and application templates.