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What is the quality of chronic disease guidelines commonly used in Irish general practice?
An evaluation using the AGREE instrument

Introduction

Clinical practice guidelines are a major tool for improving healthcare. However, the methodological quality of guidelines can be highly variable. The Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation (AGREE) instrument has been validated for assessing the quality of guidelines, and can highlight areas for improvement over six domains.

Aim

To evaluate the quality of guidelines commonly used by Irish general practitioners (GPs), using the AGREE instrument.

Methods

Current chronic disease guidelines were identified through searches of the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) website. Non-ICGP guidelines recommended by the ICGP as suitable were also included. For comparison, guidelines issued by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (UK) and the National Medicines Information Centre (Ireland) for depression and asthma were also assessed as these were the two commonest conditions for which the ICGP have also produced guidelines. The quality was assessed by two authors independently, using the AGREE instrument.

Preliminary findings

Seventeen guidelines were included and are being assessed under the following domains: scope and purpose, stakeholder involvement, rigour of development, clarity and presentation, applicability, and editorial independence.

Likely implications of findings

This research will highlight the quality of guidelines commonly used by Irish GPs, and will generate recommendations on where improvements (if any) are needed.