

Factsheet I: AGREE II – Guideline Appraisal

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**Care Pathways Toolkit for Healthcare
Professionals & Patient Representatives**



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FACTSHEET I: AGREE II – Guideline Appraisal

The **AGREE II** (Appraisal of Guidelines for REsearch and Evaluation) process and methodology provide a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of clinical practice guidelines (CPGs). It helps assess the rigor and transparency of guideline development, ensuring that they are based on sound methodology and provide clear, actionable recommendations. AGREE II is widely used in healthcare settings to evaluate the quality of a guidelines and demonstrate editorial independence.

Key Components of the AGREE II Process:

1. Scope and Purpose:

- This criterion assesses whether the guideline clearly defines its purpose, scope, and target population, and whether the recommendations are specific to the stated purpose.

2. Stakeholder Involvement:

- This evaluates how well various stakeholders (e.g., healthcare providers, patients, policymakers) were involved in the guideline development process. Broad stakeholder engagement ensures that the guideline addresses relevant issues and is practical for its intended audience.

3. Rigor of Development:

- This section examines the process used to gather and synthesize evidence, the methods used to reach consensus, and the extent to which the guideline is based on sound scientific evidence. It includes assessing if the guideline development group followed a systematic approach and if the recommendations are clearly linked to the evidence.

4. Clarity of Presentation:

- This criterion evaluates how clearly the recommendations are presented and whether the guideline is easy to follow. It also considers whether the guideline's language is accessible to its intended audience and if the recommendations are unambiguous.

5. Applicability:

- This assesses the guideline's potential for implementation in clinical practice. It looks at factors such as resource implications, potential barriers to implementation, and how well the guideline addresses variations in patient preferences and settings.

6. Editorial Independence:

- This criterion evaluates whether the guideline development process was free from external influence or conflicts of interest, ensuring that the recommendations are unbiased and based on evidence rather than external pressures.

AGREE II can be used retrospectively to evaluate a published guidelines when it is being considered by a hospital institute or network for adaption. In addition, AGREE II can be used at the end of the development of a new guideline as an internal quality check before publication.

Methodology:

The AGREE II tool consists of a 23-item instrument organized into the six key domains listed above. The process involves the following steps:

1. **Initial Review:** Guideline developers or external reviewers (x2-3) assess a guideline using the AGREE II instrument. Reviewers rate each item on a scale independently, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), based on how well the guideline meets the criteria in each domain.
2. **Scoring and Evaluation:** The scores are compiled to give an overall assessment of the guideline's quality. Reviewers discuss areas of agreement and disagreement in their scoring. The domain scores are then averaged, and each guideline is rated in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.
3. **Feedback and Improvement:** After the assessment, feedback can be provided to the guideline developers, who can use the results to revise and improve their guidelines.
4. **Final Report:** The overall evaluation, including strengths and limitations, is summarized in a final report, which can be used by healthcare providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about guideline adoption.

Benefits of AGREE II:

- **Transparency and Consistency:** It provides a standardized approach for evaluating guidelines, ensuring that the process is transparent and consistent.
- **Evidence-Based Practice:** It helps ensure that guidelines are developed using rigorous, evidence-based methods.
- **Improved Healthcare Decisions:** By assessing the quality of guidelines, AGREE II can lead to better-informed healthcare decisions and improved patient outcomes.

In summary, the AGREE II tool helps improve the quality and reliability of clinical practice guidelines, providing healthcare professionals with a reliable mechanism to evaluate and apply the best evidence to practice.

Annex I: AGREE II TEMPLATE

Domain		Item	AGREE II Rating						
			1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
	1.	The overall objective(s) of this guideline is (are) specifically described.							
	2.	The health question(s) covered by the guideline is (are) specifically described.							
	3.	The population (patients, public, etc.) to whom the guideline is meant to apply is specifically described.							
	4.	The guideline development group includes individuals from all the relevant professional groups.							
	5.	The views and preferences of the target population (patients, public, etc.) have been sought.							
	6.	The target users of the guideline are clearly defined.							
	7.	Systematic methods were used to search for evidence.							
	8.	The criteria for selecting the evidence are clearly described.							
	9.	The strengths and limitations of the body of evidence are clearly described.							
	10.	The method for formulating the recommendations are clearly described.							
	11.	The health benefits, side effects and risks have been considered in formulating the recommendations.							
	12.	There is an explicit link between the recommendations and the supporting evidence.							
	13.	The guideline have been externally reviewed by experts prior to its publication.							
	14.	A procedure for updating the guideline is provided.							
	15.	The recommendations are specific and unambiguous.							
	16.	The different options for management of the condition or health issues are clearly presented.							
	17.	Key recommendations are easily identifiable.							
	18.	The guideline described facilitators and barriers to its application.							
	19.	The guideline provides advice and/or tools on how the recommendations can be put into practice.							
	20.	The potential resource implications of applying the recommendations have been considered.							
	21.	The guideline presents monitoring and/or auditing criteria.							
	22.	The views of the funding body have not influenced the content of the guideline.							
	23.	Competing interests of guideline development group members have been recorded and address.							
Overall Guideline Assessment	1.	Rate the overall quality of this guideline.	1 Lowest quality	2	3	4	5	6	7 Highest quality
Overall Guideline Assessment	2.	I would recommend this guideline for use.	Yes	Yes, with modifications				No	



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