

Clinical practice guidelines in the Netherlands

Philip Van der Wees, Erik Hendriks, Rob De Bie

In Evidence based clinical practice guidelines, best practice in Physical Therapy diagnosis and treatment is described, based on available scientific evidence and experience from clinical practice. Clinical practice guidelines are 'systematically developed statements to assist both practitioner and patient when making decisions about appropriate health care for specific clinical circumstances' (Lohr et al, 1992). Their purpose is 'to make explicit recommendations with a definite intent to influence what clinicians do' (Hayward et al, 1995). There is some proof that evidence based guidelines are instruments to provide insight, both in quantity as in quality, in the health care provided. It has been suggested that guidelines are adequate management instruments for continuous quality improvement, quality assurance and continuing education (Hendriks et al, 2000).

Evidence-based clinical practice guidelines were first introduced in the Netherlands in 1994 (Van Ettehoven et al, 1994). A draft protocol for developing guidelines was designed and tested during the development of two guidelines. Subsequently, the protocol was adjusted and used as a basis for new guidelines (Hendriks et al, 2000; KNGF, 1998a; KNGF 1998b). Currently nine evidence-based guidelines have been developed and published in the Dutch Journal for Physical Therapy, while several other guidelines are under development.

The guideline development protocol (GDP) will be revised in 2003 as a result of international developments in guideline development. One of the major developments was the result of the work of an

international group of researchers (AGREE collaboration), who have developed the AGREE-instrument to provide a framework for assessing the quality of clinical practice guidelines. AGREE stands for Appraisal of Guidelines for Research & Evaluation (Agree collaboration, 2001). The instrument is a generic tool primarily designed to help guideline developers and users assess the methodological quality of clinical practice guidelines.

Part of the revision of the GDP will focus on the process of updating guidelines. Shekelle and colleagues (2001) describe a model for updating guidelines based on several situations, which may lead to decisions about updating, such as changes in evidence, changes in outcome, changes in interventions and available recourses.

Another source for decisions in updating guidelines is the experience of Physical Therapists working with guidelines. Data from prospective cohort studies, in which Physical Therapists work according to the guideline, provide information about the applicability of guidelines and possible barriers for the use of guidelines. Another way to receive information about the applicability of guidelines is to provide a feedback loop for Physical Therapists, in which they can send information to the KNGF about the use of guidelines by email.

In order to test the GDP we will start updating the acute ankle sprain guideline. When the first guideline is updated (scheduled 2004) we have come full-cycle: development, implementation, evaluation and adjustment of clinical practice guidelines.

References

- 1 Lohr KN, Field MJ. A provisional instrument for assessing clinical practice guidelines. In: Field MJ, Lohr KN (eds). Guidelines for clinical practice. From development to use. Washington D.C. National Academy Press, 1992.
- 2 Hayward RSA, Wilson MC, Tunis SR, Bass EB, Guyatt G, for the Evidence-Based Medicine Working Group. Users' guides to the Medical Literature. VIII. How to use clinical practice guidelines? A. Are the recommendations valid? JAMA, 1995;274:570-574.
- 3 Hendriks HJM, Bekkering GE, Van Ettehoven H, Brandsma JW, Van der Wees PJ and De Bie RA. Development and Implementation of National Practice Guidelines: a prospect for Continuous Quality Improvement in Physiotherapy. Physiotherapy 2000, 86,10:535-547.
- 4 Van Ettehoven H, Hendriks HJM, Reitsma ER. Centrale Richtlijnontwikkeling Fysiotherapie. Amersfoort/ Utrecht, KNGF/NPi/CBO, 1994.
- 5 Report of WCPT Expert meeting on EBP October 2001, London, WCPT, 2002.
- 6 The AGREE Collaboration. Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation (AGREE) instrument. London, 2001.
- 7 Shekelle P, Eccles MP, Grimshaw JM, Woolf SH. When should guidelines be updated? BMJ, 2001, 323:155-7.