

UNDERSTANDING CLINICAL GUIDELINES

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Guidelines have become an established tool to improve the quality of healthcare for patients.

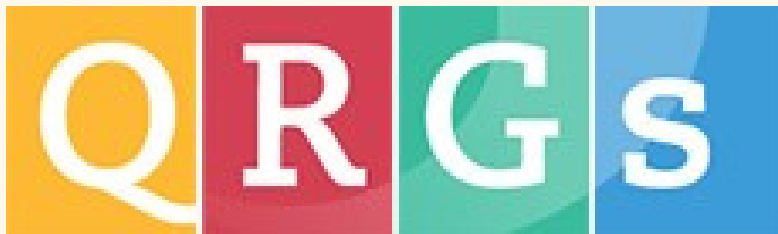
WHAT ARE CLINICAL GUIDELINES?

Clinical guidelines aim to help health professionals make the best decisions about treatment or care for a particular condition or situation. The guidelines are typically written in statement form by a reputable organization. The authors of guidelines review the research literature and take advice from experts to gather the current evidence on which to base the recommendations in a guideline.

WHY USE CLINICAL GUIDELINES?

Clinical guidelines build on Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) and have the following advantages:

- ☒ To improve healthcare outcomes for patients and drive up the quality of patient care
- ☒ To reduce unwanted variations in practice
- ☒ To summarise research findings and make clinical decisions more transparent
- ☒ To support clinical audit activities



The ICGP Quality & Safety in Practice (QSIP) Committee produce Quick Reference Guides (QRGs) on topics of relevance to general practice.

Available from: www.icgp.ie/

WHERE TO FIND CLINICAL GUIDELINES?

There are a large number of clinical guidelines available to GPs developed by a range of bodies, from Medical Specialist Societies, the Royal Colleges and National Organisations such as the NICE and SIGN. **NICE clinical guidelines** set out the clinical care that is suitable for most patients with a specific condition in the NHS in England and Wales. **SIGN** develops and publishes evidence-based clinical practice guidelines for use by the health service in Scotland. **The National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC)** was established in Ireland by the Minister for Health in September 2010 to develop National Clinical Guidelines. They aim to provide guidance and standards for improving the quality, safety and cost effectiveness of healthcare in Ireland.

TRIP Database: www.tripdatabase.com is a useful database to search for clinical guidelines.