

Health care guidelines, recommendations, care pathways

Paola Laricchiuta

National Centre for Rare Diseases

Istituto Superiore di Sanità

(Italy)



Definitions used to describe a pathway

- Review of literature published between **2000-2003**
- **84 different definitions**
- Most frequently used terms: **clinical pathways, critical pathways, integrated care pathway, care pathway** and **care map**

De Bleser *et al.*, Defining pathways, *J Nurs Manag.* 2006; 14(7), 553-56

Defining clinical pathways for a SR

- List of criteria to define a clinical pathway
- 27 studies included , 14 of them termed the intervention “clinical pathway”
- Other terms used were **protocol, care model, care map, multidisciplinary care, evidence-based care and guideline**

Kinsman *et al.*, What is a clinical pathway? Development of a definition to inform the debate. *BMC Med.* 2010 May 27;8:31

What are guidelines?

Statements that include **recommendations** intended to **optimize patient care** that are informed by a **systematic review of evidence** and an assessment of the benefits and harms of **alternative care options**

This definition provides a **clear distinction between the term “CPG” and other forms of clinical guidance** derived from widely disparate development processes (e.g., consensus statements, expert advice, and appropriate use criteria)

What are guidelines?

Systematically developed statements by a systematic review of evidence and an assessment of the benefits and harms of alternative care options, which assist providers, patients and stakeholders to **make informed decisions** about appropriate health care for specific circumstances, **including clinical interventions, public health activities, or government policies.**

Health care guidelines provide **recommendations** that describe in **detail** what the recommended action is and under what circumstances it should be performed.

Filippini *et al.*, RARE-Bestpractices Glossary, 2014
<http://www.rarebestpractices.eu/pagine-23-glossary>

Standards, tools, projects

International agreement
regarding core
methodological
principles

A word cloud containing the following terms: GRADE (red, vertical), Guideline 2.0 (orange), IOM standards (red), DECIDE (green), AGREE II (yellow-green, vertical), ADAPTE (green), RARE-Bestpractices (blue), GIN standards (orange), and GLIA (yellow).

Component	Description
Composition of guideline development group	A guideline development panel should include diverse and relevant stakeholders, such as health professionals, methodologists, experts on a topic, and patients.
Decision-making process	A guideline should describe the process used to reach consensus among the panel members and, if applicable, approval by the sponsoring organization. This process should be established before the start of guideline development.
Conflicts of interest	A guideline should include disclosure of the financial and nonfinancial conflicts of interest for members of the guideline development group. The guideline should also describe how any identified conflicts were recorded and resolved.
Scope of a guideline	A guideline should specify its objective(s) and scope.
Methods	A guideline should clearly describe the methods used for the guideline development in detail.
Evidence reviews	Guideline developers should use systematic evidence review methods to identify and evaluate evidence related to the guideline topic.
Guideline recommendations	A guideline recommendation should be clearly stated and based on scientific evidence of benefits; harms; and, if possible, costs.
Rating of evidence and recommendations	A guideline should use a rating system to communicate the quality and reliability of both the evidence and the strength of its recommendations.
Peer review and stakeholder consultations	Review by external stakeholders should be conducted before guideline publication.
Guideline expiration and updating	A guideline should include an expiration date and/or describe the process that the guideline groups will use to update recommendations.
Financial support and sponsoring organization	A guideline should disclose financial support for the development of both the evidence review as well as the guideline recommendations.



Why guidelines?

- Improve the quality of healthcare
- Reduce inappropriate practice variation
- Support transparent decision making
- Enhance translation of research into practice
- Inform research priorities by highlighting areas where uncertainties or no evidence exist
- Support efficient use of resources

Mapping exercise on guidelines in the EU

Level of engagement in guideline production

Countries with well established activities, countries “making progress” in the development of guidelines, countries “recently adopting” some guidelines or where these are in the planning stages

Regulatory framework

Only a few countries have a legal mandate. Countries with well-established systems have mostly decided to implement them on a voluntary basis

Bodies responsible for guideline production

Central agency, multiple actors but there is some level of coordination, multiple actors without central coordination

Clinical guidelines for chronic conditions in the European Union. 2013 Eds Legido-Quigley H. et al. The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies-Observatory Series 30

Mapping exercise on guidelines in the EU

Stakeholders

The engagement varies broadly by MS

Patients and users very little involved in the development process

Quality control

The countries with long-established processes for guideline production have also systems to assess their quality (AGREE II)

Clinical guidelines for chronic conditions in the European Union. 2013 Eds Legido-Quigley H. et al. The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies-Observatory Series 30

What are care pathways?

A care pathway is a **complex intervention** for the mutual decision making and organisation of care processes for a well-defined group of patients during a well-defined period.



EUROPEAN
PATHWAY
ASSOCIATION
www.E-P-A.org

European Pathway Association (E-P-A)

<http://www.e-p-a.org>

What do they do?

Document what is to be done, by whom, and when

- Outline a process of steps which are taken throughout the patient journey
- Formalize multi-disciplinary/multi-agency working
- Enable the activities of the team to be coordinated
- Bridge the translation of guidelines or evidence into local structures
- Enable recording, analysing and acting on variances

Auditing variances

- Deviation from the care planned in the pathway
- Key aspect of the implementation process
 - Can highlight areas of improvement within the structure / extra resources are required
 - Help clinicians to understand why care might not be delivered as planned
- Not necessarily imply poor care

Why care pathways?

- supporting **proactive care management** for relatively predictable trajectories and ensuring that patients receive relevant clinical interventions and/or assessments in a timely manner
- promoting **adherence to guidelines** or treatment protocols thereby reducing variation in practice
- improving **documentation** of treatment goals, documentation of communication with patients, carers and health professionals
- improving **physician agreement** about treatment **options**
- **supporting decision-making** when they incorporate a decision-aid
- may be particularly effective in **changing professional behaviors** in the desired direction, where there is scope for improvement or where roles are new

Allen D *et al.* Systematic review of the effectiveness of integrated care pathways: what works, for whom, in which circumstances? [Int J Evid Based Healthc.](#) 2009 Jun;7(2):61-74

Survey on the use of care pathways

163 respondents (25% response rate) - members of E-P-A

19 out of 39 countries represented were European (highest proportion from UK)

Results

- Definitions and legal basis vary
- Low estimated coverage
- Variability in the use of evidence-based guidelines
- Poor involvement of patients in pathway development

Knai C et al., International experiences in the use of care pathways, *Journal of Care Services Management* 2013;7(4), 128-135

Guidelines, pathways and ERNs

- Great improvements, but challenges remain
- Harmonize terminology/concepts is imperative to collaborate
- Build on the existing initiatives and coordinate efforts