

Guidelines: the good, the bad, and the ugly

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A discussion of clinical practice guidelines in gastroenterology, covering their development, limitations, implementation challenges, and the work of the UEG Quality of Care Committee to improve guideline uptake and patient outcomes.

KEY POINTS

- Guidelines are pivotal references for clinical decision-making based on best available evidence, but they are not flawless and include expert opinion, especially when high-quality research is lacking.
- Different continents produce different guidelines on the same topic because expert panels have varying experiences, epidemiology, and convictions, particularly in areas with limited data.
- Critical thinking is essential when using guidelines; readers should evaluate the scope, panel credentials, methodology, evidence grading, and consensus levels, with low evidence and high consensus indicating expert opinion.
- Implementation remains the major challenge, as high-quality guidelines often fail to translate into practice due to resource limitations, lack of drug availability, or insufficient uptake by practitioners.
- The UEG Quality of Care Committee developed tools to aid implementation, including an interactive guideline app and quality indicators, and encourages cascaded guidelines that provide minimum care standards alongside advanced options for better-resourced settings.

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