Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)
Principles of SIGN

• Publicly-funded (NHS Quality Improvement Scotland)

• Professionally-led (SIGN Council – healthcare professional bodies in Scotland; patient representatives)

• Professionally-developed (SIGN Executive – CPG experts)

• Independent of politicians and industry
SIGN Council
40 representatives

SIGN Executive

Programme Management Team
12

Research and Information Team
5

Administration and Networking
3

Guideline development groups
What are we trying to achieve?

Guideline recommendations that:

• are based on the strongest available evidence
• take account of the balance between benefits, harms
• take account of the realities of health care delivery
• are acceptable to patients and health care professionals
• are implementable
Topic selection:

- Guideline topics are proposed by healthcare professionals
- Existence of variation in practice
- Evidence of effective practice
- Burden of disease
- Priority area for national health service
  - cardiovascular disease, cancer, child health, mental health
Multidisciplinary development group

Multidisciplinary participation is essential to ensure:

- Proper evaluation and interpretation of specialty-specific evidence
- Relevance to the realities of everyday practice
- Ownership and co-operation of all stakeholder groups
Skill mix within the group

- Relevant range of clinical expertise
- Specialist expertise (e.g. health economics)
- Practical knowledge
- Patient empathy
- Critical appraisal skills
Systematic reviews meta-analyses → Quality rating
Randomised controlled trials → Quality rating
Cohort, case control studies → Quality rating
Non-experimental studies → Considered judgement

Collect the evidence → Rate the evidence → Summarise the evidence → Consider the evidence → Evidence based recommendation

Evidence tables → Graded recommendations

Systematic review process
Considered judgement

Evidence level = study type + quality assessment

- Volume of evidence
- Consistency of evidence
- Generalisability
- Clinical impact
- Resource implications

Systematic literature review

Evidence table of validated studies

Considered judgement of multidisciplinary guideline development group

Graded recommendation
Consultation and peer review

- National open meeting
- Peer review
- SIGN Editorial Group
Is SIGN good for you?

• Target population <5 million

• Target population >5 million
Is SIGN good for you?

Core principles:

• Independence from government & industry
• Explicit, documented process
• Multidisciplinary involvement
• Managed development process
Key challenges

• Grading different types of evidence
• Balancing benefits, harms, and costs
• Faster development process
Most critical factor

Leadership!