

Scientific & Clinical Information

Committee for Practice Guidelines & Policy Conferences

(previously named Committee for Scientific and Clinical Initiatives Role in the ESC Structure)

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The Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences (CPGPC) was established by the Board of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) at its second meeting in October 1994. It considers innovative roles for the involvement of the ESC in the new health-related policies and in clinical practice, prevention, quality assurance, research programmes and health economics in cardiovascular diseases.

The CPGPC deals with the following activities:

1. Identification of new roles for the ESC in research and health care, in close contact with the Committee for European Affairs of the ESC
2. Development of new targets to be addressed by the ESC and the strategies to achieve them
3. Supervision and monitoring of the preparation of guidelines and recommendations by Task Forces, Study Groups or Consensus Panels to improve the practice of cardiology and to support research activities.
4. Establishment and monitoring of inventories and registries. Whenever appropriate, the CPGPC is responsible for the initiation or motivation of such activities. The monitoring of their preparation and progress, the coordination of related activities, and the preparation and publication of their results.

Purpose of Guidelines and Recommendations by Task Forces, Study

Groups or Consensus Panels.

The rapid development in basic and clinical research requires the continuing adaptation of clinical practice. Therefore, guidelines and recommendations have gained increasing influence on how cardiology is practised. Guidelines and recommendations are of special help if there is no general consensus due to multiple and often conflicting data. A clear description of areas of consensus and disagreement by experts and practitioners will allow more rational diagnostic or therapeutic approaches.

Guidelines and recommendations by Task Forces, Study Groups or Consensus Panels may address the following items:

1. Cost-effective medical care, which is a major goal in present health care systems, may be better achieved by generating practice guidelines.
2. Measures of quality and competence in post-graduate training are of great importance with increasing interest by the public.
3. There is an increasing demand for measures to ensure the quality of health care. This can be achieved by addressing, for instance, the role of a specific professional group, of a technique, or of an intervention.
4. The role of basic and clinically oriented cardiovascular research, the implementation of new technology, the issue of cost-benefit analysis, and the role of preventive medicine.
5. Harmonization of medical practice in Europe.
6. Problems of professional or ethical conduct (e.g. policies on conflict of interest).

A description of the role of practice guidelines and how they are established can be found in the literature. (Daniel. J. Ulyot: President's page: Practice Guidelines. JACC 1994; 24:569-79; William W. Parmley; Practice Guidelines and Cook-Book Medicine--Who are the Cooks? JACC 1994; 24:567-8)

Current position statements can also result from Expert Consensus Panels or Conferences. Controversial subjects are dealt with through Policy Conferences. Meetings such as these can be organised at the European Heart House in Sophia-Antipolis in the style of the Bethesda Conferences of the American College of Cardiology. Such conferences can be organised to produce current position statements on controversial topics for which no general consensus exists, or can be simply aimed at giving clearer direction to scientific activities in controversial areas.

Task Forces aim at preparing recommendations or guidelines or expert consensus documents and are commissioned by the CPGPC. Proposals for Task Forces can be made to the CPGPC by Working Groups, by National Societies, by other committees within the ESC, or by individuals, provided they have the support of a Working Group or National Society. The members of the CPGPC can also make proposals for Task Forces. Task Forces can only come from within the ESC, or may be set up in collaboration with other relevant societies, if appropriate.

The final composition of the Task Forces must be approved by the CPGPC. The recommendations and/or guidelines resulting from the work of the Task Force are reviewed by the CPGPC and by members of the Board and also by external reviewers, when necessary. The final version is then sent back to the CPGPC for approval. Once approved the document is sent to the European Heart Journal and published. Publication in the official journals of other societies is also possible, when and where appropriate. Each publication should clearly indicate the names of the members of the Task Force, as well as the names of those responsible for writing the report. The report should also state that all members of the Task Force approved the final document, that it underwent the review process of the CPGPC, and was also approved by the Board of the Society. The date of final approval by the CPGPC should be included.

Study Groups can be established by Working Groups of the ESC to study a specific topic or to prepare opinions and recommendations. The task of the CPGPC is to coordinate these activities. The statement of reports, etc. appearing from such Study Groups reflects only the opinions of these Study Groups. In all publications, it should be clearly stated that the contents of the article reflect the opinion of the Study Group. Such publications have to be submitted to the usual reviewing process of a journal. Publication in the European Heart Journal is encouraged. Procedures for Recommendations and/or Guidelines to be handled by the Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conference (CPGPC)

1. Proposals for Task Forces can be made to the CPGPC by Working Groups, by National Societies, by other committees within the ESC; or by individuals, provided they have the support of a Working Group or National Society. The members of the CPGPC can also make proposals for Task Forces. Task Forces can only come from within the ESC, or may be set up in collaboration with other relevant societies, if appropriate.
2. Proposals should be clearly formulated and have well defined goals. They should be sent to the ESC Coordinator of the Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences (CPGPC), Ms. Veronica Dean. The proposal should indicate the source of funding. The proposal will be distributed to the members of the CPGPC to be discussed at the next meeting.
3. The CPGPC will submit the proposal with a recommendation for approval or rejection to the Board of the ESC. The Board has the right of final decision on whether or not to create a new Task Force and should inform the CPGPC in a timely manner.
4. If the proposal is approved by the Board of the ESC, a Task Force will be established. The CPGPC will follow closely the work done by this proposed group.
5. The Task Force will prepare a report with the signature of all of its members indicating that all approved the final version. This final document should then be sent to the CPGPC. All recommendations will undergo evaluation by the CPGPC, which will use external reviewers, unless clearly unnecessary, and will circulate the report to the ESC Working Groups with an interest in this topic. Depending on the recommendations made, the CPGPC will either advise the Board and give final approval or return it to the Task Force for improvement.

Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences

Appendix I

Examples for recommendations or guidelines originating from a Task Force (example 1) or a Study Group (example 2) describing the procedures by which these were prepared and who bears the responsibility.

Example 1

Description of the origin of a report is given as an example:

„This report/these guidelines/this policy statement, etc. summarizes(s) the outcome of a workshop/conference/etc. held in...on.... The need for the... was proposed by.... It was organized by..., and its funding was administered by.... The workshop was chaired by.... Participating in the workshop and co-authoring the report were.... All have agreed to the final manuscript in writing. This report underwent external review under the regulations set forth by the Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences of the European Society of Cardiology, and it received final approval by the Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences on....

This article appears in similar form in the ... Journal.

Correspondence and reprint requests to...“.

Example 2

As above, and "... The recommendations set forth in this report are those of the Study Group participants and do not reflect the official position of the European Society of Cardiology.“

Annual Report on the Activities of the Committee for Practice Guidelines and Policy Conferences

By Werner Klein

During the second meeting held at the Heart House on March 8, 2001 the CPGPC approved the minutes of the last meeting held in Vienna on Nov. 20, 2000 and decided to use not only the Level of Evidence A, B, and C but also the Recommendation Classes I and II for the writing of Guidelines. All on-going activities (Management of Syncope, Management of Chest Pain, Guidelines on Sudden Death, Management of Aortic Dissection, Management of Bacterial Endocarditis, Management of Grown-up Congenital Heart Disease, Management of Primary Pulmonary Hypertension, Update on Myocardial Infarction, Update on Congestive Heart Failure, Expert Consensus Document on Anti-thrombotic Agents as well as joint Task Force Guidelines on Atrial Fibrillation) were reviewed. There is regular contact between the Chairman and the Coordinator of the CPGPC and the chairpersons of all on-going Task Forces to keep up-to-date on their activities.

New fields of activity were defined by agreeing on the creation of the following new Task Forces and Policy Conferences:

1. Expert Consensus Document on Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy together with ACC (Chairperson: Bob O'Rourke, William McKenna)
2. Task Force on Supraventricular Arrhythmia (Chairperson: Carina Blomström-Lundqvist)
3. Task Force on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention (Chairperson: Guy De Backer)
4. Task Force on Management of Cardiac Disease during Pregnancy (Chairperson: Celia Oakley)
5. Task Force on Management of Pericardial Diseases (Chairperson: Bernhard Maisch)
6. Task Force on Update on Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (Chairperson: Sigmund Silber)
7. Expert Consensus Document on the Appropriate Use of Beta Blockers and ACE Inhibitors (Chairperson: Lopez Sendon)
8. Policy Conferences on the Need for Resources for Budgetless Clinical Research (Chairperson: Jean-Pierre Bassand)
9. ACC/AHA/ESC Consensus Conference on Ethics (Chairperson: Maarten Simoons, Rosemarie Robertson)
10. Expert Consensus Document on Neonatal Electrocardiography – Interpretation and Guidelines on Management (Chairperson: Peter Schwartz)

It is planned to update the Guidelines for Guidelines and produce a manual for guideline writing as well as an inventory of all existing guidelines in Europe for the Congress in Stockholm in September 2001.