



## CLINICAL PRACTICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC MEMBERS

Medical societies use strict methods to develop and publish guidelines using scientific evidence relevant to a specific topic. The organizations then present that evidence in the form of guidelines to include recommendations for clinicians and administrators who provide healthcare. The [Society of Critical Care Medicine](#) (SCCM) gathers experts, such as nurses, physicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, physician assistants, dietitians, clergy, and others who care for critically ill and injured patients and their families to serve on guideline development panels. SCCM guidelines are typically published in one of the well-known and highly respected journals *Critical Care Medicine* or *Pediatric Critical Care Medicine*. Occasionally SCCM will partner with organizations to develop and publish guidelines in other journals as well. Recently SCCM began inviting patients and their families to serve as public members on guideline development panels. These FAQs have been developed for these public members.

### GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The process for developing guidelines is extremely rigorous. Guidelines can take several years to complete. Along the way there are many important and often complex steps. SCCM offers an open-access standard operating procedures manual on its website written for guideline leadership and panelists that sequentially outlines the guideline development process. Figure 1 illustrates the interconnectedness of the process wherein the patient and family are primary drivers of the work in accordance with SCCM's vision and mission.



Figure 1. Guideline Development Process

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **1. Who leads the process of SCCM guideline development, and who participates?**

The American College of Critical Care Medicine, an SCCM body governed by a Board of Regents, oversees the guideline process. The Regents select two co-chairs and two co-vice-chairs as key leaders for every guideline. These are highly experienced critical care medicine experts. A panel, the term used for the wider development group, includes at least one methodologist whose role is to ensure that strict standards are applied to the guideline development process. SCCM methodologists are often critical care clinicians who know the subject well. The methodologist has advanced training in guideline development and is integral to the process of forming the recommendations that will guide clinicians in the care of patients and sometimes also guide interactions with patients' families. Each guideline panel includes one or more medical librarians and someone appointed to review and carefully manage any conflicts of interest declared by panel members, including public members. Project management is coordinated by SCCM's Quality Department. SCCM accepts no industry (drug manufacturers, device companies or other commercial interest) funding for its guidelines; however, donations are accepted from the general public and clinicians to help support this important work.

#### **2. How are topics identified?**

Anyone can recommend a topic. The topics must be within the scope of SCCM's mission and must not compete with similar guidelines already published or in development. Recommendations for guidelines are considered carefully and prioritized by the Regents, who represent SCCM's multiprofessional membership and are

practicing critical care clinicians. Adequate research related to the topic must be available to address the questions that frame a guideline's focus, as well as adequate expert volunteers and resources. SCCM publishes an average of three to six guidelines each year, with approximately 15 in simultaneous development cycles. This sometimes includes revisions to existing published guidelines and those for which new evidence is available.

**3. Why are public members invited to participate in guideline development?**

Since the aim of publishing guidelines is to offer informed, evidence-based recommendations for clinicians to improve care and outcomes for patients and their families, it is important for patients and families to have input. Each guideline panel is charged with finalizing outcomes relevant to the specific population addressed. Outcomes can be related to improved quality of life or survival or may be targeted to improving end-of-life care. All of these outcomes are within the scope of practice for critical care medicine. Clinician-defined best outcomes are sometimes different from those desired by patients and their loved ones. Public members, by virtue of their firsthand experience, can help the panel to better understand which outcomes are optimal by participating in guideline development. It is an important contribution and is deeply appreciated.

**4. What is the role of a public member?**

Public members will be engaged at varying times throughout the guideline cycle, to include:

- Assisting in the identification of relevant outcomes
- Participating in and providing input during conference or video calls related to recommendations
- Providing suggestions once the manuscript is in draft form and being prepared for submission to the journal
- Participating in podcasts, videos, or interviews after publication

**5. Are special skills required?**

No special skills are needed to participate in guideline development. The ability to speak up and to share views related specifically to the guideline topic in a constructive fashion is all that is required.

**6. What is the time commitment for public members?**

Guidelines can take as long as three years to develop, longer for complex guidelines. During that time there will be intermittent opportunities for public members to contribute. A general estimate is less than three hours per month. Most video or conference calls are held on weekdays during business hours. Toll-free telephone, local telephone numbers or voice-over-internet connections are often used. A timeline will be provided so that public members can learn more about key milestones and when they might be asked to participate.

**7. Is there compensation for public members?**

Public members may be offered optional authorship on the guidelines to properly acknowledge contributions; however, there is no payment available for guideline activities. The role is performed on a volunteer basis. Panel members are also volunteers. If public members are asked to attend an in-person meeting, travel expenses will be provided, to include economy airfare, hotel, and ground transportation.

**8. If you have questions, please contact the [SCCM Guidelines Manager](#) for more information at +1-847-827-6990.**