



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 this 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* and *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 are to be completed within 18 months. The process comprises 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.

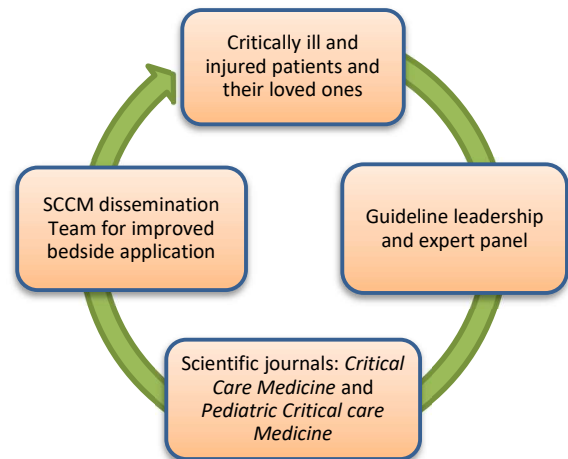


Figure 1. Guideline Development Process

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 board of regents select two highly experienced critical care medicine experts to serve as cochairs and two to serve as co-vice-chairs. These four experts are the key leaders for every set of guideline. 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, as well as 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 Research and Quality Department. SCCM accepts no industry (drug manufacturers, device companies, or other commercial interests) 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?

SCCM members 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 are prioritized by the board of 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's goal is to publish two guidelines per year. This sometimes includes focus updates or full revisions to existing published guidelines and those for which new evidence is available.

4. 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 that is deeply appreciated.

5. What is the role of public members?

Throughout the guideline development cycle, public members will be engaged in:

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

6. Are special skills required for public members?

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.

7. What is the time commitment for public members?

Guidelines are to be completed within 18 months. During that time there will be intermittent opportunities for public members to contribute. The time commitment is estimated to be less than three hours per month. Most video and conference calls are held on weekdays during business hours. Toll-free telephone numbers, 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.

8. Are public members compensated?

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, including economy airfare, hotel, and ground transportation.

If you have further questions, please contact the [SCCM Guidelines Manager](#) or call at Customer Service at +1 847 827-6888 for more information.