

Overview on rules for ESPGHAN Guidelines and Position Papers

Introduction

ESPGHAN strongly supports the development of guidelines and position papers and aims to achieve the highest possible scientific quality and value for clinical practice, education and research. In this overview we define the standards and procedures for endorsement by the society.

The general concepts on ESPGHAN guidelines and position papers are provided in the ESPGHAN rules and regulations:

“Committees and Working Groups may take the initiative of producing scientific documents in the name of ESPGHAN (consensus statements, comments, medical position papers, guidelines). These documents are publications that present and make public the official opinion and recommendations of ESPGHAN about certain childhood health issues. In accordance with the current Code of Conduct, position papers of the society should focus on scientific, clinical or public health issues but should not aim to focus on or endorse commercial products or services.

The Council (and also the Committees’ Chairs in the case of Working Groups) should be informed of such initiatives and their scope before any action taken; in particular information is desirable concerning topic and reasons for the choice and timeline. In case Committees and Working Groups consider the matter confidential it is possible to inform only the President and the General Secretary.

The Chair of the Committee involved should examine the declaration of DOI of the last 12 months of participants and exclude members with a conflict of interest that compromises the credibility of the document.

All committee manuscripts should be sent to JPGN. When other organizations are involved, publication in JPGN should be suggested, or a joint publication with another journal that represents the other organizations. When the journal is not JPGN, approval should be given by Council before submission of the manuscript to this journal. If approval is not granted, the Committee/Working Group may submit the paper, but not as an ESPGHAN paper. “

Definitions

An **ESPGHAN Guideline** is a comprehensive document that addresses specific research or clinical questions and abides by evidence based rules for guideline development.

An **ESPGHAN Position Paper** (or consensus paper) addresses a topic for which guidance is necessary but there is only limited scientific evidence and therefore the recommendations are mostly based on expert opinion-

ESPGHAN Guidelines and **Position Papers** are published on behalf of the society, generally in the JPGN, are listed on the ESPGHAN website, and should include the ESPGHAN name in the title. They represent the official position of ESPGHAN and are published after a detailed review and approval by ESPGHAN council.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Working Groups (WGs) may also develop manuscripts that report on their work/research, reviews of current information, or opinions. Such manuscripts are not considered “Guidelines” or “Position Papers” and may be published under the responsibility of the authors, generally in the JPGN, but will not be posted on the ESPGHAN website. The ESPGHAN name must not appear in the title and a disclaimer should be added to the publication stating that “Although this paper is produced by the ESPGHAN SIG/WG XXX it does not necessarily represent ESPGHAN policy and is not endorsed by ESPGHAN”.

Proposals for a guideline or position paper

Committees intending to produce a guideline or position paper should submit a proposal (see submission forms) via the ESPGHAN Office to the ESPGHAN Secretary, who will coordinate a review of the proposal by Council. Proposals

from SIG's or WG's should also be commented on by the respective Committee Chair who may involve the Committee.

The proposal should define the topic, the key questions addressed, the professionals involved, the literature search strategy, the method of consensus development, the proposed group(s) to be involved in the consensus process, the proposed place of publication (preferably JPGN), any financial requirements, and should include declarations of potential conflicts of interests. Authors are encouraged to involve Patient and Parent Associations in the consensus process. Submission documents should be submitted to the ESPGHAN office. The Council's response will usually be within 3 weeks. This may include recommendations on refinement of the research questions or the involvement of other groups. However, if significant issues arise the review might take more time.

Council approval of the proposal is **mandatory** if the name of ESPGHAN is to appear on the publication.

Topic addressed:

ESPGHAN guidelines or position papers should address pertinent topics of high relevance for clinical practice, policy or research and should aim to arrive at conclusions that are helpful for practice. They should not focus on or promote commercial products or services, and should usually avoid citing commercial brand names. A mere repetition of previously published information will usually not justify the publication of an ESPGHAN position paper or guideline.

Selection of involved professionals:

The selection of involved professionals should be based on their qualification in the field to be addressed. A mixed composition with respect to area of expertise, gender, and geographic location is recommended where appropriate.

Systematic literature search

For ESPGHAN guidelines a systematic literature search in at least three databases is mandatory. ESPGHAN may agree to appropriate requests for funding external outsourcing of the literature search and data extraction in evidence tables.

For position papers a systematic review of the literature published during the five preceding years in at least one database (e.g. PubMed), but preferably with more than one database, based on a predefined search strategy with key words is recommended. Key papers published prior to those five years which are cited in manuscripts retrieved or known to the experts involved should also be considered. At least two members of the lead authors should review all manuscripts considered.

GRADE classification

Guidelines must use the GRADE system to classify the level of evidence and the strength of recommendations for statements and conclusions⁽¹⁾.

Consensus development

For guidelines, the Guideline Development Group (GDG) should develop a manuscript with proposed key statements and recommendations. The key statements and conclusions will be reviewed and voted on by the GDG using the Delphi process via an electronic platform provided by ESPGHAN and JPGN. The results of the voting process should be disclosed in the final manuscript (or as supplementary information). Only statements reaching 85% agreement will be accepted.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

All individuals who contributed to the development of a position paper/guideline and the consensus process are required to submit a declaration of potential conflicts of interest using the format and form proposed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (<http://www.icmje.org/>). These shall be updated and shared on the ESPGHAN website when submitting the final manuscript.

REVIEW OF GUIDELINES OR POSITION PAPERS

The manuscript, once agreed upon and approved by the lead authors / GDG as well as the respective Committee/SIG/WG, should be submitted via the ESPGHAN Office to the ESPGHAN Secretary who coordinates the review in collaboration with and supported by the Executive Committee. The Secretary will invite at least two anonymous reviewers who are experts in the field but have not been involved in the development of the respective manuscript.

The manuscript and external reviews are then submitted for council review. All council members are requested to submit a short electronic report and vote either as “approve”, “minor concerns raised”, “major concerns raised”, or “reject”. Those without sufficient expertise in the area can declare that they abstain. Council should aim to complete the process within four weeks. No response from a Council member will be regarded as acceptance.

If any council member votes for “major concerns raised” or “reject”, a discussion will be held (usually by telephone) to resolve the issue involving council members who have not abstained. In the case of continuing disagreement the President, Secretary and JPGN Editor will make a final decision. If the authors disagree with the review decision they can choose to submit the manuscript to another journal, but not as an ESPGHAN document.

If the manuscript is “approved” the lead authors/steering group (GDG) are informed by the General Secretary and the manuscript is forwarded to the editor of JPGN by the ESPGHAN Office. If revision is recommended by reviewers and/or council, the Secretary will forward the respective comments to the lead authors/steering group (GDG) and invite them to respond to the reviews and resubmit a revised manuscript. The revised manuscript may be resubmitted to external anonymous review if considered appropriate. If minor concerns were raised, the Executive Council can take a final decision to accept, whereas the manuscript should be reviewed again by council if major concerns or a recommendation to reject were previously reported.

It is proposed that the external anonymous review of joint ESPGHAN - NASPGHAN guidelines and position papers will be coordinated by the society that did not instigate the work. It is suggested that usually one North-American and one European reviewer are invited. The manuscript, or the manuscript revised after consideration of the reviewers’ comments, will be subjected together with the reviewers’ comments, to both the ESPGHAN and NASPGHAN councils for review and approval.

The editor of JPGN is asked to consider the review process supervised by Council as a full peer review process that usually would not necessitate a further peer review by the journal. In case the JPGN editor wishes to invite more reviewers, this should be reported and explained to Council.

Reference:

⁽¹⁾ Guyatt GH, Oxman AD, Vist GE, Kunz R, Falck-Ytter Y, Alonso-Coello P, et al. GRADE: an emerging consensus on rating quality of evidence and strength of recommendations. *BMJ*. 2008 Apr 26;336(7650):924-6.

ANNEXES: ESPGHAN Guidelines - Submission Form , ESPGHAN Position Papers - Submission Form, Conflict of Interest Form

ESPGHAN – Stepwise Process for Guidelines and Position Papers**Submission and Review****STEP 1 – Submission of proposals**

- 1) All proposals should be submitted directly to the ESPGHAN office using the appropriate application forms that can be found on the ESPGHAN website in the members' library in the myESPGHAN area.
- 2) Proposals can either be submitted by Committee Chairs, Special Interest Group (SIG) Chairs, or by Working Group (WG) Chairs.
- 3) The office will keep track of all proposals and forward them to the Secretary General, who will check if all formal requirements are met and who will ask the applicant to correct any missing requirements if necessary. When a proposal is submitted by a SIG or WG chair, an approval statement by the Committee Chair needs to be attached to the submission form.
- 4) After the Secretary General has checked the submission the office will circulate the proposal to the council to ask for approval within a set deadline.
- 5) The office will inform the applicants of the outcome.
- 6) STEP 1 should not take longer than 3 weeks.

STEP 2 – Submission of completed guidelines or position papers

- 1) All completed guidelines / position paper manuscripts have to be submitted to the ESPGHAN office clearly labeled as stated in the submission form.
- 2) The office will keep track of all submitted guidelines / position papers and forward all to the Secretary General.
- 3) The Secretary General, in close cooperation with the EC and the JPGN editor, will invite at least 2 anonymous external reviewers to review the paper within a set time frame (generally two weeks) and to submit their reviews (based on the AGREE II reporting checklist) to the ESPGHAN office.
- 4) The ESPGHAN office will forward the submitted guideline / position paper together with the comments of the external reviewers to council.
- 5) All council members are requested to submit a short electronic report and to vote either as "approve", "minor concerns raised", "major concerns raised", or "reject" within a given deadline. Those without sufficient expertise in the area can abstain.
- 6) If any council member votes for "major concerns raised" or "reject", a discussion will be held (usually by telephone) involving council members who have not abstained to resolve the issue. In case of continuing disagreement the President, Secretary and JPGN Editor will take a final decision. If the authors disagree with the review decision they can choose to submit the manuscript to another journal but not as an ESPGHAN publication.
- 7) If the manuscript is "approved" the lead authors/steering group (GDG) are informed by the Secretary General via the ESPGHAN Office, and a copy of the approval is sent to the JPGN editorial office. The authors should then submit the manuscript to the editor of JPGN.
- 8) If revision is recommended by reviewers and/or council, the Secretary General (via the ESPGHAN office) will forward the respective comments to the lead authors/steering group (GDG) and invite them to respond to the comments and resubmit a revised manuscript. The revised manuscript may be resubmitted to external anonymous review if appropriate. In case of previous minor concerns, the Executive Committee may take a final decision to accept, whereas the manuscript should be reviewed again by council if major concerns or a recommendation to reject were previously raised.
- 9) STEP 2 should not take longer than 4 weeks.