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Abstract Book

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Parallel Session 5.5: Oral presentations

How many terms are used to describe practice guidelines?

Yaolong CHEN¹, Susan NORRIS², Qi WANG¹, Liang YAO¹, Xiaoqin WANG¹, Dang WEI¹, Kehu YANG¹,

¹ Evidence-Based Medicine Center of Lanzhou University, China

² Guidelines Review Committee Secretariat, WHO

Background: The titles of practice guidelines should be clear, distinct and easy to identify. However, different guideline developers tend to use different terms to represent and describe guidelines.

Objectives: To investigate the number of terms are used to describe practice guidelines. Methods We included published guidelines developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and approved by WHO Guidelines Review Committee between 2007 and October 2013. Each guideline was independently examined by 2 investigators.

Results: We included 135 guidelines and found there were 31 different terms in the titles of WHO guidelines to describe guideline documents. The five most frequent terms were: guidelines (39%), recommendations (15%), statement (7%), guidance (5%), manual (4%). Other terms included guide, guiding principles, handbook, document, report, rapid advice, booklet, toolkit, management, framework, care, criteria, classification, initiative, module, interventions, medical reasons, textbooks, policy, response, role, technical paper, technical consultation, technical note, tool, treatment.

Discussion: Various terms were used to describe practice guidelines and nearly 40 percent are uncommon and atypical terms. This variability can lead to confusion and misunderstanding in the dissemination and implementation of WHO guidelines.

Implications for guideline developers/users: We recommend that guideline developers use standard terms in the title of practice guidelines so that they can be readily identified. Guideline users and researchers must use a variety of terms find guideline documents.