Oral presentation

Making recommendations about medical tests: a tool for finding the clinical pathway

Gowri Gopalakrishna, Miranda Langendam, Rob Scholten, Patrick Bossuyt, Mariska Leeflang

Background: The clinical context in which a test is used is critical when it comes to recommendations about medical tests. Preceding tests may alter the patient population to be tested; the result of the test informs treatment decisions and these treatment decisions influence health outcomes. The clinical context is needed to map and judge the available evidence for its value and to make relevant recommendations regarding the use of the tests. Recent research indicates that guideline developers see the value of developing a clinical pathway, but that guidance is needed to define it for the test(s) they are evaluating. Therefore, we are developing a tool that creates a clinical pathway using 'building blocks' and signaling questions.

Objective: To develop a tool to define the relevant clinical pathway for the evaluation of diagnostic tests in guidelines addressing diagnostic questions.

Method: The tool (pilot version) is developed based on a review of the literature and interviews with guideline developers, a survey among experts in the field of evidence-based diagnostics, brainstorming and user-testing in guideline developers.

Results: We will present the development of the tool, demonstrate the pilot version and report the results of the user testing.

Implications for guideline developers: The tool will help guideline developers to define the clinical context of the diagnostic test, to further specify the key questions and types of evidence that are needed to make a recommendation about a diagnostic test.