Commentary

College Commences Clinical Consensus Statement Development

In early 2013, the ACFAS Board of Directors approved funding to commence development of new clinical consensus statements. The Board sunsetted the College’s prior clinical practice guidelines (CPG) in 2011 as they did not meet the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) standards for CPGs, and it would be cost-prohibitive to develop IOM-compliant CPGs. These new clinical consensus statements will be shorter, slightly less-evidence-based medicine (EBM) stringent, and more user friendly than the CPGs.

In cooperation with the Research-EBM Committee, the Board identified 2 topics and selected panel members to participate in this important project. Monica Schweinberger, DPM, AACFAS, is chairing the Antibiotic Prophylaxis Clinical Consensus Statement panel while Adam Fleischer, DPM, MPH, FACFAS, is chairing the DVT Prophylaxis Clinical Consensus Statement panel.

Over summer 2014, the 2 clinical consensus statement panels identified search criteria, selected databases to use, conducted extensive literature searches, reviewed and summarized articles, and developed clinical consensus questions. The 2 groups met in early September 2014 to discuss the findings of their clinical consensus questions, particularly where there were discrepancies. The 2 panels continue to develop and refine the statements with the goal of publishing them in early 2015.

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Editorial

White Papers, Position Papers, Clinical Consensus Statements, and Clinical Practice Guidelines: Future Directions for ACFAS

Day-to-day clinical decisions, hospital rules of operation, and access to both public and private health care finances have become increasingly more influenced by the information developed and published by medical and surgical societies. Similar to the varying degrees of academic weight applied to evidence-based medicine, white papers, position papers, clinical consensus statements, and clinical practice guidelines each have a different purpose and role in the health care arena.

A white paper is a document created by an authoritative group that helps interested parties understand an issue or make a clinical decision. There is little to no scientific literature to review; the role of a white paper is not to develop a scientific document but rather to convey the recommendations of a society on a particular topic. For example, the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) has developed a white paper on the beneficial partnership between Academic Health Centers and our members (http://www.acfas.org/positions/).

A position paper designates a policy report that focuses on explaining, justifying, or suggesting a particular form of care. Accordingly, it also contains background information and explanations in order to provide a more robust understanding of the issues involved and the rationale behind the position adopted. Of paramount importance is an appreciation that the strength of the position paper is related to the authoring scientific body. In the College’s case, that would be the ACFAS Board of Directors adopting a position paper created by a specific task force or committee of members. ACFAS has developed 11