



National Collaborating Centre  
for Methods and Tools  
Centre de collaboration nationale  
des méthodes et outils

## How to use the AGREE II Instrument presented by Caroline Zwaal, Health Research Methodologist at the Program in Evidence-based Care at McMaster University.

featuring a story of implementation from Manitoba Health

### Introduction

Welcome to the ninth webinar in the *Spotlight on Knowledge Translation Methods & Tools* series presented by CHNET-Works! and the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. In this episode we are joined by two advisors on tap to discuss the AGREE II Instrument. Caroline Zwaal is a Health Research Methodologist at the Program in Evidence-based Care at McMaster University, and has completed over 100 evaluations using the AGREE II Instrument. Joselito Montalban is a policy analyst in the Public Health branch of Manitoba Health, and will speak to his experience of using the AGREE II Instrument to update an existing guideline with Manitoba Health.

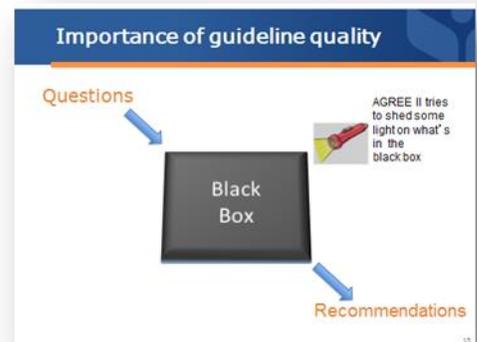
### Purpose of AGREE II

The Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation (AGREE) Instrument was designed to give users insight into the quality of clinical guidelines, and as a validated instrument is widely considered the gold standard for guideline appraisal. All too often, readers understand a guideline's initial question and final recommendations, but not enough about the process that leads from one to the other. The goal of the AGREE II Instrument is to shed light on guidelines' methodology to bring attention to the presence of bias, the guidelines' evidence base, and the usability of the document. To this end, the AGREE II Instrument serves three functions:

1. To help assess methodological quality of guidelines

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priorities, and used as a starting point for discussion among reviewers.

## My AGREE PLUS

My AGREE PLUS is a collection of three platforms to support individuals and groups in using the AGREE II instrument. In addition to supporting individual appraisals through the website, My AGREE PLUS allows users to join group appraisals of a single guideline as well as coordinate a group appraisal and track progress. The goal of My AGREE PLUS is to make collaboration easier when assessing guidelines using AGREE II.

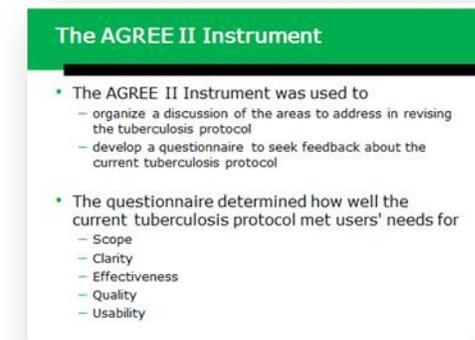
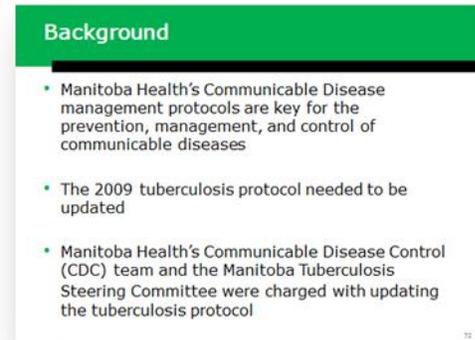


## AGREE II in Practice: Story from Manitoba Health

In 2012, Manitoba Health started the updating process of the provincial 2009 tuberculosis protocol with the impending release of the new National Canadian Tuberculosis Standards. Soliman Guirgis, in consultation with the TB Protocol Updating Working Group, used the AGREE II instrument to standardize the updating approach and process. The team was reluctant to update the protocol unilaterally without input from the intended audience. Ideally, they wanted the protocol revisions to be shaped by stakeholder opinions while still adhering to a validated tool.

So they created a self-administered questionnaire for stakeholders and the protocol users with questions based on the six domains and 23 items of the AGREE II instrument. In creating the survey, Soliman's team was able to seek feedback from protocol users while ensuring the subject of feedback matched the evidence-based approach of the AGREE II. In this sense, rather than being used to evaluate the existing protocol, the AGREE II was adopted as a way to draw out ideas from stakeholders and guide changes.

The feedback received based on the AGREE II survey was both rich and valuable to Soliman and the working group. For example, answers from the Clarity of Presentation domain shed light on the impracticality of storing data in appendices rather than within the



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text. Other revisions based on user feedback included shortening the protocol from 128 pages to 15 pages, including a clearly stated focus, improving the layout, and clarifying the acronyms used throughout. Ultimately, over 100 health care professionals from a wide range of backgrounds shared their opinions and helped to shape the updated protocol, all guided by the AGREE II instrument.

## Conclusion

Assessing the quality of guidelines can be a daunting task, and many public health professionals may be uncertain how to do it or where to start. The AGREE II instrument represents an excellent resource for individuals and groups assessing methodological quality of a guideline, developing a guideline, or hoping to understand the type and amount of information that ought to be reported in a guideline. The wealth of resources available online at [www.agreetrust.org](http://www.agreetrust.org) makes using the AGREE II easy and effective. Soliman Guirgis adapted the AGREE II to help Manitoba Health seek stakeholder feedback in the design of their own protocol. He is just one of many people using the tool to ensure high-quality guidelines are informing public health decision-making.

**The revised tuberculosis protocol**

- The questionnaire identified that the presentation of the tuberculosis protocol was problematic
  - i.e., relevant data was in appendices, forcing users to flip back and forth when using the document
- The new tuberculosis protocol
  - is more concise
  - clearly focuses on its purpose as a protocol
  - refers users to other resources for details related to clinical guidelines, such as drug treatments and side effects

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