Appendix 1: In depth interview topic guide

Interview Objectives

Primary aim

To understand challenges and issues in

1. evaluating (rating) evidence

2. making recommendations on medical tests

Sample size and selection criteria

We are targeting about 10-20 guideline developers using a telephone and/or face to face semi structured interview format. Exact sample size will depend on when data saturation is reached.

Selection criteria

- English speaking

- Working currently or worked in the last 6 months on developing a guideline that involved a medical/diagnostic test

- Profile of interviewees should be international and persons involved in all stages of the guideline development i.e. from formulating key questions to searching and rating evidence to making recommendations

1. Basic Characteristics

1.1. How many guidelines has your organization developed to-date which included making recommendations on a medical tests?

1.2. How is guideline development funded in your organization?

1.3. What is the current or most recent (in last 6 months) guideline you have developed that included a medical test recommendation?

1.4. What is the size and what are the disciplines that make up the guideline development group?

2. Open ended questions with topic guides

Notes for the Interviewer

For the following questions, it is not necessary to stick to the exact line of questioning or order. The purpose of these questions is to be open and explorative.

It is important, however, that the subject matters in the topic guides are explored and the style of questioning kept open and explorative. Not leading.

2.1. Can you share with me the main difficulties you face in making guidelines for medical tests?

Explore all stages of guideline development with interviewee:

a.   Preparatory steps

- Formulating key questions

- Defining outcomes

- Considering testing pathways, analytical framework, care pathway

- How are decision points in a test pathway defined

- Alternative testing strategies: are these considered and how

b.   Searching for the evidence

-       Explicit methodology, minimum databases, search filters used?

c.   Types of evidence

-       What types of evidence is gathered, Is patient outcome data important?

d.   Appraising & summarising the evidence

-       How is evidence rated at individual study level and as a body of evidence- what criteria are used?

-       Are systematic reviews of test accuracy used/done?

-        What are your views on meta-analysis: useful, easy to interpret, relevant, not always appropriate

e.   Moving from evidence to recommendations

-       What methods are used to "translate" the evidence into recommendations?

-       How is applicability factored? E.g. cost, resource implications, applicability of patients / setting.

-       What level of uncertainty is acceptable, how is this determined, how is this communicated?

2.2   Some guideline organizations such as NICE develop a pathway as part of the guideline development process (refer to the example definition provided below) Can you share with me what you think of this? Is it a useful and feasible step to have in medical test guideline development?

-       What difficulties do you think you may face if you included such a step in your process?

-       What elements do you think such a pathway should have?

-       Do you think this is a feature that can be incorporated for all types of test questions?

-       If you already have such a feature in your guideline development process, can you explain how it is created and used for making recommendations?

(NICE defines a care pathway as: the diagnostic sequences, treatments, monitoring, retreatment, treatment for side effects and complications that are part of the test-treatment pathway. A flow chart or other diagram can be used to illustrate the pathway)

2.3. Do you use or are aware of the GRADE system to develop guidelines on medical tests?

- What is your experience in using this system for medical tests guidelines?

- In other words, how usable is the system in terms of: time, resources, complexity, understanding and appreciation of the guideline panel?

2.4 What would you most like to see in the guideline development research that will make your job easier when it comes to medical tests?

- Do clinicians understand test accuracy?

- Is there enough of emphasis on test accuracy in medical school/ training of clinicians?

- What can be done to improve understanding of test accuracy, medical test guidelines?

- What clinician centered resources do you use?

- Any other resources/ training would you find helpful?

- Do you think providing guideline panels with basic training on test accuracy and interpretation would be useful?

- Can you describe what this training would look like?

End of Interview