Transparency and Communication = A roadmap to consensus
Introduction of clinical guidelines to perinatal care in Romania

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Background:
In spite of the high variation in Quality of Care delivered in Romanian maternities, the development and use of Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) is a relatively new feature. A consortium of Romanian stakeholder institutions, supported by international partners, including the Swiss funded Neonatology Project (RoNeonat), UNFPA, WHO, engaged in a multifaceted approach to guideline development and consensus building within a Quality Management framework.

Purpose:
To assist in the development of modern CPGs, facilitate the consensus building process through transparency and active participation of a broad spectrum of experts and potential users and document the lessons learnt for further use.

Methods:
A stepwise procedure, which took about 2 years, was used including the following key features:
- Sensitisation and training on CPG development
- Needs assessment, identification of working groups, a steering committee and production of draft guidelines
- Consensus building through the involvement of all relevant stakeholders using stakeholder reviews, working groups, IT-platforms, national meetings
- Large scale pre-testing to maximise consensus
- Final approval and integration into a national training program and continuous education efforts.

Results:
CPG development was initiated within the Romanian Neonatology Society. The experience gained, transparent processes and successful consensus building, as well as the initiation of a quality process generated the interest and support of the national authorities and professional bodies, which created the legal and organisational framework for the extension of this work to the obstetrical community. At present 8 neonatology guidelines are currently applied and 24 obstetrical guidelines are under development.

Lessons learnt
- Involving all relevant stakeholders is a key to developing a successful process and to achieving consensus.
- Strategic communication, the transparency of the process and producing successful examples facilitate the discussion.
- Although the availability of internationally used and tested guidelines is an asset, there is a strong need to understand the processes involved consensus building and review procedures to build trust and a sense of involvement.
- The incorporation of CPGs into a QM process and the integration into national continuous education programs may considerably reduce the delay between development and application of CPGs.