



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice
www.nutrition.org

Systematic Reviews, Scientific Statements, and Practice Guidelines Policies and Procedures

Objectives

Systematic reviews, scientific statements, and practice guidelines on nutrition and nutrition-related topics that are germane to the mission of the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) will be developed to assist researchers, regulatory agencies, public/private funding agencies, health professionals, the media, and consumers. Aside from providing a summary and critical discussion concerning the most current research on the topic, these documents may also include research priorities for investigators and funding agencies; regulatory and policy recommendations; guidelines for nutrition in health promotion, risk reduction, and disease management; and/or dietary advice for consumers.

Types of Communications

There are three general types of ASN-sponsored publications in this regard: systematic reviews, scientific statements, and practice guidelines.

- ***Systematic Reviews***

Systematic reviews (SR) are detailed reviews of the literature that use a formal approach to evaluate the quantity and quality of published scientific evidence. In the case of ASN-sponsored SRs, a systematic evaluation of research concerning a nutrition-related topic will be conducted.

Because SRs are regarded as providing science-based, official views of the ASN on particular nutrition-related scientific topics, they will include an ASN-identifying statement such as *“After weighing the quantity and quality of scientific evidence, the ASN supports...”* An ASN-supported SR will be published in an official ASN journal or as deemed appropriate by the ASN Executive Board and will be valid for a designated period of time or sooner if significant new data emerge.

Joint Systematic Reviews ASN may develop an SR jointly with other societies or associations. When this occurs, details of authorship, timeline, inter-society review, confidentiality, journal publication venue(s), and, if appropriate, recommended word count and number/date limitations for references will be agreed upon in advance and detailed in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between/among these groups.

Endorsements of Systematic Reviews. ASN may also officially endorse another professional society's SR and publicize this as appropriate.

- ***Scientific Statements and Task Force Reports***

Scientific statements (SS) or task force reports (TFR) are traditional narrative reviews summarizing the current state of knowledge, research gaps and funding issues, and conclude with summary recommendations or a "position" on the subject. Active areas of investigation may also be identified. An ASN-endorsed SFP will include a statement affiliating it with ASN such as "*ASN interprets the evidence for to be....*"

An ASN-supported SS or TFR will be published in an official ASN journal or as deemed appropriate by the ASN Executive Board and will be valid for a designated period of time or sooner if significant new data emerge.

ASN may also develop SS or TFR reports jointly with one or more national or international societies associations or task forces. Details of authorship, timeline, inter-society review, confidentiality, journal publication venue(s), and, if appropriate, recommended word count and limitations for references will be agreed upon in advance and detailed in a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Endorsements of Scientific Statements and Task Force Reports from Other Societies or Task Forces. ASN may also choose to officially endorse another professional society's SS or TFR and publicize this as appropriate.

- ***Practice Guidelines***

A practice guideline (PG) addresses recommendations for optimal nutrition related to health promotion (e.g., healthy aging), risk reduction (e.g., obesity), disease management (e.g., cardiovascular disease) or an integrated approach (obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, metabolic syndrome). In general, while there may be overlap among the three categories, the focus is on overall diet quality (e.g., dietary pattern) for health promotion, key food components (e.g., energy, *trans* fats) and/or population groups (e.g., pregnant women) for risk reduction, and tailored nutrition education/counseling for disease management (e.g., diabetes). The elements of a practice guideline/statement will consist of the purpose or intent, a concise review and grading of the literature relevant to the subject, to include areas requiring more research, and a grading of the overall strength and conviction of the recommendation(s) made. A PG uses a uniform approach to evaluate both the available scientific data and their quality, using generally accepted levels of evidence. The PG will include a statement such as "*ASN promulgates the following practice guidelines for ...*"

An ASN approved practice guideline will automatically undergo review/revision by the RPG every 4 years or sooner if important new data emerge. It is recommended that PGs will be published in *The American Journal for Clinical Nutrition* or another ASN journal deemed appropriate by the ASN Executive Board.

Joint Practice Guidelines ASN may also develop a PG jointly with one or more national or international society, association, or task force. Details of authorship, timeline, inter-society review, confidentiality, journal publication venue(s), and if appropriate, recommended word count and limitations for references, will be agreed upon in advance and detailed in a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Endorsements of Practice Guidelines from Other Societies - ASN may also choose to officially endorse another professional society's PG and publicize this as appropriate.

Development

Proposals for SR, SS, and TFR will be submitted to ASN via a proposal form. The RPG Committee will be responsible for identifying and prioritizing topics from all ASN stakeholders that warrant a SR, SS, or PG and working with ASN's Executive Officer to ensure there is appropriate funding prior to pursuing any activity. The RPG committee, through the Chief Executive Officer, will inform the ASN Executive Board of proposals.

If the proposal is accepted by the Executive Board, the RPG committee will identify an individual or writing group to prepare a draft of the document. An ASN conflict-of-interest (COI) form must be completed by all authors prior to initiating a paper. The RPG Committee will review all conflict-of-interest forms prior to confirming the writing group. Writing group members should not have a significant conflict in a particular industry related to the topic of a statement.

A manuscript is expected to be submitted by the authors to the RPG in less than 12 months from proposal approval.

Review Process

All ASN developed and/or endorsed systematic reviews, scientific statements, task force reports and practice guidelines will be subject to the following peer-review process:

Identification of Reviewers: Each writing group will be encouraged to suggest up to three individuals to serve as reviewers. The RPG Committee will review the suggested names and may elect to accept all, some or none of the reviewers. The RPG Committee will identify additional reviewers, as necessary. Ideally, three to five reviewer names will be identified and invited to participate in the review process. A manuscript must be reviewed by at least three individuals.

Response to Reviewer Comments: All reviewer comments will be forwarded to the writing group for consideration. The writing group must provide a document to the RPG Committee that addresses and/or responds to each comment, as well as a final draft.

Identification of RPG Member to Serve in Managing Editor Role: The RPG Committee will identify one committee member to coordinate the review process. This individual will review all comments that are received; communicate comments to the writing group; and assess the writing group's response to reviewer comments. This individual will recommend to the RPG Committee whether or not the statement should be approved and forwarded to ASN's Executive Board for review/approval. A manuscript may be sent back to the writing group if the identified RPG member is not satisfied with the writing group's response to reviewer comments.

Once the peer-review process is complete and the Managing Editor is satisfied with the manuscript, the manuscript will be sent to the RPG Committee for consideration. The RPG Committee may approve or reject the manuscript. If a RPG member is a member of the writing group, he or she must refrain from participating in the review and approval process.

Once approved by the RPG Committee, all statements are sent to ASN's Executive Board for final approval. The Executive Board that will exercise its fiduciary responsibilities and ensure the process has been followed and the manuscript is acceptable for publication.

Reporting

The RPG Committee will prepare a semi-annual report to the Executive Board on its activities.