

**Author:** Celeste Naude

**Co Author:** Solange Durao (Cochrane South Africa, South African Medical Research Council, South Africa), Mark Lawrence (Institute of Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University, Australia)

**Topic:** Capacity development for public health nutrition

**Title:** Applying systematic reviews in evidence-informed public health nutrition guideline development

**Presentation Type:** Workshop

Purpose

**Objective:** To build participants' awareness of and capacity to understand evidence-informed public health nutrition (PHN) guideline development, with an emphasis on the role and application of systematic reviews (SRs)

**Content:** Technical aspects, methods and standards used for developing guidelines using an evidence-informed process, contrasting this with conventional guideline development approaches, and focussing on the role and application of SRs in the evidence-informed process

**Target audience:** researchers and decision-makers interested in evidence synthesis, PHN guideline and policy development.

**Means of engagement:** The workshop will adopt an interactive approach, providing participants with opportunities to engage with the content, other participants and contributors

Motivation

**Technical merit:** Health guidelines can be defined as any document containing recommendations about interventions, whether clinical, public health or policy recommendations. Recommendations provide information about what policy-makers, health-care providers or patients should do, and thus should be informed by reliable research evidence. Ensuring all relevant evidence has been systematically and transparently sought, presented and appraised is not always easy. SRs present an effective approach and if conducted rigorously, present current best available evidence to answer a specific question. By reducing selective reporting and accumulating all relevant evidence, SRs can reduce uncertainty and increase precision of pooled results,

and thus accuracy of decisions. Evidence-informed guidelines use transparent processes, are based on well-conducted SRs, and use structured consensus frameworks to grade evidence quality and strength of recommendations. Increasingly, developers of public health guidelines (e.g. WHO) are adopting this approach, as they recognise the need for more rigorous guideline development processes.

**Relevance:** This workshop will help build capacity in PHN in relation to evidence-informed guideline development and applying SRs in this process. The nutrition burden in most countries has become increasingly complex, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, with concurrent burdens of overweight, undernutrition and micronutrient malnutrition, against a backdrop of limited resources, overburdened health systems and competing priorities. Concerns about relationships between environmental sustainability and food security are introducing new and urgent challenges. Understanding evidence-informed guideline development is a skill needed by individuals involved in PHN decision-making.

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. Understand the evidence-based guideline development process
2. Define SRs
3. Understand how SRs fit into evidence-based PHN guideline development
4. Understand strengths and challenges of evidence-based guideline development, specifically in relation to PHN

**Engagement of facilitators:** Facilitators are from Australia and South Africa, with experience in preparing SRs, contributing to PHN guideline and policy development at sub-national and national levels. Facilitators will contribute jointly to the session plan below.

**Involvement of participants:** The workshop will be interactive, encouraging participant engagement during presentations and specific activities. A session plan has been developed.

**Outcomes:** Feedback from the interactive presentations and small-group discussions will be consolidated into a short workshop report that will include recommendations for future actions.

**Disclosure of conflict of interest:** The authors have no potential conflicts of interests to be declared. This workshop is not funded by any commercial organizations that could directly or indirectly benefit from the workshop content.

