

THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING ACR PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS

As part of the overall reorganization of the ACR Commission and Committee structure, the Standards and Accreditation Commission (renamed the Quality and Safety Commission) was formed. It is one of seven operational commissions. The members of this commission are, to a large extent, composed of people who also serve on a specialty commission. There are eight specialty commissions and each of these commissions has a series of operational committees, one of which is a Guidelines and Standards Committee. The chairpersons of these committees make up the membership of the Quality and Safety Commission. This guarantees a broad spectrum of specialty representation on the Commission as well as members from private practice settings and academic medical centers with a wide geographic distribution (see organizational matrix on next page).

The method for developing a practice guideline or technical standard starts with the specialty commissions receiving suggested guidelines or standards from specialty organizations, individual practicing radiologists, ACR State Chapters, or any other appropriate entity related to the specialty of radiology.

The specialty commission, usually through the efforts of its Guidelines or Standards Committee, can accept, modify, or reject the proposed guideline or standard based on available evidence and expert consensus. If accepted, whether it is modified or not, the proposed guideline or standard is then referred on from the specialty commission to the Quality and Safety Commission for review and revision.

The proposed guideline or standard then goes to the Board of Chancellors (BOC) where it is either reviewed and sent forward or remanded for further development. If approved, it is then forwarded to the Council Steering Committee (CSC). After being received by the CSC the proposed guideline or standard is assigned to a specific member of the CSC.

The draft guideline or standard is then circulated for comments during a four-week field review cycle. The ACR Web site offers all members the option of submitting their comments online. For the immediate future a hard copy of the draft is mailed to all Councilors, Alternate Councilors, BOC, CSC, and State Chapter Presidents. All are encouraged, however, to submit their comments online.

The comments are reviewed by an ad hoc committee of the CSC and the guideline or standard is revised by this committee. Each proposed guideline or standard has its own committee. The committee is composed of writers of the guideline or standard, writers of comments from the state chapters, members and staff of the guidelines or standard committee, as well as legal counsel. A concerted effort is made to include as many interested radiologists of varying opinions as possible on this ad hoc committee which meets either in person, at the expense of the College, or via one or more conference calls.

The Council then assigns the revised guideline or standard to an ACR reference committee at the Annual Meeting in preparation for revision, adoption, or rejection. Any ACR member may comment during the open session of the reference committee. The guideline or standard, after revision in the reference committee, is placed on a consent calendar and presented to the Council for consideration.

The guidelines or standards that are approved at each College meeting are sent as a separate mailing to all College Members for implementation in their practices. The effective date for guidelines or standards is October first of that year.

Existing guidelines or standards will be reviewed every five years or sooner if warranted by significant changes in technology or evidence or as directed by the ACR Council, CSC, BOC, or the Quality and Safety Commission.

This process provides opportunity for input from all sectors of radiology. The chairperson of the Quality and Safety Commission is most interested in this broad participation and invites comments as well as proposals for new practice guidelines or technical standards from all members of the American College of Radiology. The timeline for submission of drafts is attached.