



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

***Systematic Reviews, State of the Science Papers and Practice Guidelines:
Policies and Procedures***

Objective: To develop and publish ASN-supported systematic reviews, state of the science papers, and practice guidelines on nutrition topics for use by researchers, regulatory agencies, public/private funding agencies, health professionals, the media, and consumers that are germane to ASN's mission. Such Society documents may include research priorities for investigators and funding agencies, regulatory and policy recommendations, practice guidelines for nutrition in health promotion, risk reduction and disease management, and/or dietary advice for consumers. All types of communications described below begin with the submission of a proposal per the *Systematic Reviews, State of the Science Papers and Practice Guidelines: Proposal Form* <insert link>.

Types of Communications:

• ***Systematic Reviews***

A systematic review (SR) reflects an official view of the ASN and is published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (Am J Clin Nutr)* or the *Journal of Nutrition (J Nutr)*. It is based on an original, formal, systematic evidence-based literature review that weighs the quality and quantity of data available on a nutrition-related topic and summarizes the Society's stance on it. An SR uses a uniform approach to evaluating both the available scientific data and their quality, using generally accepted levels of evidence. The abstract and paper each include a statement such as, "In the opinion of ASN." Full public access to SRs is available via the ASN website. The suggested citation and permissions are detailed online also.

See:

- Sackett DL et al., *Evidence-Based Medicine: How to Practice and Teach EBM*, 2nd ed., Churchill Livingstone, 2000.
- Moher D, Tricco AC. Issues related to the conduct of systematic reviews: a focus on the nutrition field. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2008;88:1191–9.
- Chung M, Ethan M, Balk EM, Stanley Ip, Raman G, Yu WW, Trikalinos TA, Lichtenstein AH, Yetley EA, Lau J. Reporting of systematic reviews of micronutrients and health: a critical appraisal. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2009;89:1099-1113.
- Heaney RP, Rafferty K. Preponderance of the evidence: an example from the issue of calcium intake and body composition. *Nutr Rev* 2008;67(1):32–9.

Joint Systematic Reviews: When ASN chooses to jointly develop an SR with one or more national societies or associations, a detailed memorandum of understanding (MOU) is needed regarding authorship, timeline, inter-society review, confidentiality,

journal publication venue(s), and, if appropriate, recommended word count and number/date limitations for references. The MOU assigns one society/association as the lead. Each society and journal performs its own review(s) in a coordinated manner to enable simultaneous publication of the SR if appropriate.

Endorsements of Systematic Reviews: ASN may choose to officially endorse another professional society's SR in its entirety, in part, or as modified to be mutually agreeable. The dated statement is published on the ASN website with an electronic link to the originating society's document. A summary and press release may be developed and posted to coincide with ASN's endorsement of the SR. More detailed policies and procedures are needed to ensure that endorsements are timely.

- ***State of the Science Papers***

When there are insufficient evidence-based studies for an SR, there are two avenues to generate a comprehensive review, ie, a state of the science paper (SSP), of a nutrition-related topic. First, members are encouraged to submit SSP directly to the *J Nutr* or the *Am J Clin Nutr* for consideration through the standard review process. This traditional narrative review summarizes the current state of knowledge, research gaps, and funding issues. It may identify active areas of investigation. Secondly, a proposal may be submitted to the Reviews, Papers, and Guidelines (RPG) Committee (see below) requesting that ASN endorse an SSP on a specific topic. In this instance, the RPG Committee in coordination with the Journal Editor (*Am J Clin Nutr* or *J Nutr*) will confirm/deny ASN interest in an SSP, establish expectations, and identify the journal reviewers at the onset of the process. Members are encouraged to write SSPs for consideration by ASN through either process. An SSP may be published in *Am J Clin Nutr* or *J Nutr* or posted on the ASN website. The SSP includes a statement such as "ASN interprets the state of the science for" Member access to SSPs is available via the ASN website. Permissions and any limitations regarding further distribution are described. Unsolicited reviews or those solicited by journal editors but not published as official stances of the Society are not necessarily covered by these policies and procedures.

Task Force Reports: To assure consistent objective decision making regarding ASN official collaboration with other professional societies in, for example, Keystone Dialogues and task forces, and to ensure effective dissemination of the resulting reports and/or recommendations, a system including a priori Memorandum of Understanding that outlines each step of the development, contributors and ultimate publication and distribution must be established.

Endorsements of State of the Science Papers: ASN may choose to officially endorse another professional society's SSP in its entirety, in part, or as modified to be mutually agreeable. The dated statement is published on the ASN website with an electronic link to the originating society's document. A summary and press release may be developed and posted to coincide with ASN's endorsement of the SSP. More detailed policies and procedures are needed to ensure that endorsements are timely.

Research Vignettes: These short (~1-3 page) vignettes describe nutrition research that has resulted in, or has the potential to result in, major public health advances. In

addition to describing the science, they outline the economic impact and/or public health applications from nutrition research. They can also be used in public policy venues to showcase successes and groundbreaking work in nutrition research.

- **Practice Guidelines**

A practice guideline (PG) addresses nutrition for health promotion (eg, healthy aging), risk reduction (eg, childhood obesity) and/or disease management (eg, cardiovascular disease). In general and while there may be overlap among the three categories, the focus is on overall diet quality (dietary pattern) for health promotion, key food components (calories, trans fats) and/or population groups (pregnant women) for risk reduction, and tailored nutrition education/counseling for disease management (diabetes). Because a PG is officially promulgated by ASN, it is published in the *Am J Clin Nutr*. A PG is ideally based on an SR that uses a uniform approach to evaluating both the available scientific data and their quality, using generally accepted levels of evidence. The PG includes a statement such as, “ASN promulgates the following practice guidelines for...” Full public access to PGs is available via the ASN website. The suggested citation and permissions are detailed online also.

(See, eg, Giddings et al. Implementing AHA Nutrition Guidelines. *Circulation* 2009;119;1161-75 at <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/119/8/1161>).

Development Process

The Reviews, Papers, and Guidelines (RPG) Committee uses the *Systematic Reviews, State of the Science Papers, and Practice Guidelines: Proposal Form* <insert link> to solicit topics from the membership, Executive Board, Scientific Councils, Committees including Public Information, Public Policy, Publications Management, and Sustaining Members, and Research Interest Sections (RIS).

1. Topic Selection:
 - a. The RPG Committee accepts a proposal based on [Need an objective rating sheet]. Acceptance of a proposal does not infer acceptance of the final document by the RPG Committee, ASN, or *Am J Clin Nutr/J Nutr*.
 - b. If a review, paper, or guideline is not accepted at any time during the development process, the authors may submit the document for peer review and publication under their own names.
2. Authorship:
 - a. The lead author must be an ASN member and serves as the contact to the RPG Committee and staff liaison. All coauthors must be approved by the RPG Committee and must sign the ASN Conflict of Interest (COI) form. COI information will be published in a table at the end of the document.
 - b. The lead author coordinates submissions from coauthors and their collective integration into the final manuscript in a timely fashion.
 - c. The lead author proposes the ASN journal to which an EBP will be submitted. A practice guideline is usually published in the *Am J Clin Nutr*.

3. Writing Process:
 - a. Following the approved outline, the coauthors devise an acceptable working method that is managed by the lead author.
 - b. ASN supports the development process by facilitating conference calls, e-mail venue, and payment of reprint costs to obtain journal articles needed for the writing of the document.
 - c. Per the agreed upon timeline that serves as the Proposal Acceptance Agreement, a draft is generally expected to be submitted to the RPG Committee within 6 months of approval.

4. Budget:

Limited funds may be available for a systematic review. The budget is developed by the lead author and approved by the RPG Committee. Budget categories include webinars for coauthors, author honoraria, student assistance, or other expenses. Payment is made upon acceptance of the final manuscript.

5. Review process:

ASN-endorsed systemic reviews and state of the science papers must undergo peer review. First, the RPG Committee will consult with the Editor to ensure the journal of choice is willing to consider the proposed manuscript for publication. Second, the RPG Committee and Editor will establish a Peer Review Panel of experts, including two identified by the Editor in accordance to standard journal process. Consideration to include an Executive Board member and members of PIC and PPC is suggested. The journal editor may identify an associate editor to work with RPG Committee to coordinate the review process. (Note: The review system for research vignettes should be transparent and practice guidelines will need a review system too.)

 - a. *Review of initial draft*
 - i. An initial draft is reviewed by the Peer Review Panel. If this initial review raises significant concerns, the RPG Committee chair or designated committee member (and staff liaison) will discuss these with the lead author and communicate the expectations of the Peer Review Panel. At this point, the author may be asked to revise and resubmit the document for another review by the Peer Review Panel. The process may be repeated as necessary until the authors meet standards defined by the Peer Review Panel after reviewing the initial draft. At any point, the Peer Review Panel may reject the manuscript or may accept it for publication in the pre-defined ASN journal without an ASN endorsement.
 - ii. A systematic review that includes a policy recommendation is also reviewed by PPC.

6. Expiration date:
 - a. Reviews, papers, and guidelines are valid for 3 years (or a period of time designated upon completion). The expiration date is published in the original document.
 - b. Prior to the 3-year expiration date, they are reviewed by the RPG Committee to determine if they should be renewed for a specified time period, revised

substantially and re-issued, discontinued, or issued in another format (eg, as more data become available--SSP to SR).

7. Publication Issues:

- a. *Publication venue*: The systematic review may be published in either the *Am J Clin Nutr* or *J Nutr*, but not both. For joint SRs with other societies/associations, the appropriate journal(s) will be determined as described above.
- b. *Authorship and title*: The authors of the published or posted document will be the individuals who wrote it. The title will indicate that it is an official document of the ASN and collaborating society/s.
- c. *Reviewers*: Whether reviewers will be acknowledged needs further deliberation as does the proposal review/acceptance/rejection process.
- d. *Page charges*: Page charges will be paid by the ASN (or split between societies/associations in the case of joint papers).

8. Other Outreach Activities:

- a. *Summary*: A 1-page summary is developed by staff and approved by the RPG Committee, PIC, PPC, PMC and/or EB. This summary is posted on the ASN website and timed with the publication in the journal or posting online.
- b. *Press Release*: The RPG, PIC and/or PPC develop communications messages for media and public policy outreach and issue a press release. ASN staff writes and disseminates the press release per the journal's publication policies and to coincide with publication in the journal or posting online.
- c. *Media inquiries and support*: ASN staff directs the media to the lead author, coauthors, ASN president, and/or ASN spokespeople as previously agreed upon. ASN staff may develop talking points to assist those in explaining the review, paper or practice guideline.

Positions, Reviews, and Guidelines Committee

1. Composition of the RPG Committee:
Membership includes a representative from the Executive Board and those with recent experience on each of the publications management, public information, public policy committees, and leadership of the Scientific Councils and Research Interest Sections.
2. Membership Term:
Three year terms are the norm. Members are appointed on a rotating basis to insure continuity. Members may be reappointed.
3. Staff support:
(Develop a position description for an upper level administrator who is a nutrition scientist with experience in translational research, manuscript writing, public policy, communications, etc.)
4. Financial support:
(Allocate adequate funds to enable ASN to produce and disseminate timely systematic reviews, state of the science papers, and practice guidelines that will benefit the public good, be valued by members, and increase ASN visibility and impact.)