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Infection prevention in general practice, the challenge of developing a guideline

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Background & Aim: Worldwide, there is an urgent need for reducing dissemination of infections associated with healthcare. This includes the prevention of infections in general practice, where the prevalence of MRSA and other multiresistant bacteria is increasing. The Dutch College of General Practitioners aimed to update the 2004 guideline on infection prevention in general practice and bring it in line with other (hospital) guidelines on this subject in 2015.

Method: We composed a multidisciplinary guideline development group consisting of general practitioners, microbiologists and an expert on infection prevention in the hospital. We carried out literature searches on the most important questions. We made evidence based recommendations or, in case there was no evidence, recommendations based on consensus. However, the field of general practitioners and microbiologists was unenthusiastic about our concept and there was a big gap in the proposed changes. In order to achieve a feasible guideline, we organized an invitational conference for all stakeholders, including the Health Care Inspectorate.

Results: During the invitational conference, barriers for general practitioners were discussed: recommendations for hospital care being adapted for general practice, the lack of evidence for most recommendations, little sense of urgency for following the guideline and the fear of being judged by the Health Care Inspectorate. The invitational conference led to consensus on a set of minimum requirements for infection prevention in general practice, which can be used as minimal standard for auditing by the Health Care Inspectorate.

Conclusion: Developing a guideline on infection prevention for general practice is a challenge. The guideline will raise awareness among GPs and help them to deal with the problems of infection prevention. Recommendations for hospital care need to be adapted to ensure acceptability and feasibility of the guideline in primary care. A set of minimum requirements can help to set a standard.