



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

July 17, 2013

Gary H. Gibbons, MD  
Office of the Director, NHLBI  
31 Center Drive, Room 5A48, MSC 2486  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2486

Dear Dr. Gibbons:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents more than 110,600 family physicians and medical students nationwide, I am writing to express the Academy's concern regarding the recent announcement from your institute to publish the integrated cardiovascular guidelines as evidentiary reviews instead of publishing the final JNC 8, ATP 4, and Obesity guidelines that have been in development for over five years and repeatedly delayed.

The AAFP has been involved in the National Program to Reduce Cardiovascular Risk (NPRCR) and has an official representative on the coordinating committee of this group. The NPRCR has been working collaboratively with the writing group of the cardiovascular guidelines over the last several years and these guidelines are pivotal in providing evidence-based recommendations for the NPRCR.

We are concerned regarding the NHLBI's plan to publish the integrated cardiovascular guidelines as evidentiary reviews. The AAFP feels strongly that these guidelines, as developed by the JNC 8 and ATP 4 writing groups, should be published as soon as possible and should not be left to organizations that are only focused on one aspect of cardiovascular disease.

If the NHLBI continues to develop clinical practice guidelines, they should adhere to the IOM Standards for Trustworthy Guidelines to ensure a strong evidence-based methodology that links the strength of each recommendation to the level of evidence supporting it and addresses potential conflicts of interest.

If the NHLBI continues to develop evidence reviews, but not develop guidelines, they should adhere to the IOM Standards for Systematic Reviews to ensure a rigorous methodology is utilized. Also, the NHLBI should coordinate topics for review with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality to avoid duplication of effort. A topic nomination process should be developed to allow specialty societies to nominate key clinical topics for review. As a result, specialty societies should work together and use these evidentiary reviews to develop clinical practice guidelines that enhance harmonization.

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Page 2  
AAFP

AAFP has a long history of developing evidence-based guidelines, alone and with other medical specialty organizations, and would welcome the opportunity to explore the development of guidelines based on the NHBLI's evidence reviews. As such, the AAFP is very interested in learning more about your "collaborative partnership" model of guideline development and would welcome further discussion on this new direction of the NHLBI.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glen Stream MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glen Stream, MD, FAAFP  
Board Chair