

Voting-procedures on EULAR Recommendations

A. Who is entitled to vote?

All members of the task force present in the room, including the convenor(s) and methodologist(s) the physicians of, the patients, the health professionals and the other (external) experts not belonging to these categories, who have listened to the presentation of the systematic literature review(s) and have actively or passively taken part in the discussions.

B. Who is not entitled to vote?

Experts who have been invited by the convenor to the expert-meeting in which the voting takes place but could not attend the meeting in person.

C. Procedure for new recommendations

Background

There is no precedent to base discussions on. Recommendations have to be worded *from scratch*. The recommendation should finally be accepted by more than 50% of those entitled to vote before being released. Fine-tuning and adjustments based on evolving evidence and opinion can always take place over time in update-processes (*recommendations are dynamic products*) (see below).

Voting should be parsimonious (*do not vote for every word*), clear and unequivocal.

Procedure in steps

1. A steering group (preparatory committee) prepares a draft-recommendation based on the evidence from the systematic literature research and internal discussions.
2. The content and syntax of the draft-recommendation is proposed to- and discussed among the members of the task force and minor changes to text or content ('tweaking') are allowed at the discretion of the convenor.
3. The convenor decides if and when a draft-recommendation is ready for voting.
4. The text of the draft-recommendation is presented clearly on the screen.
5. The question to be voted on is unequivocal and needs to be asked to the task force in the following order
Who is in agreement with the current statement?
Who is not in agreement with the current statement?
Who is abstaining?
6. Voting takes place by raising hands. Persons voting in favour, voting against and those that abstain will be counted separately in order to determine the denominator.
7. The draft-recommendation is immediately accepted if more than 75% vote in favour.
8. If 75% or less vote in favour, the chair reopens the discussion among members of the task force, elaborates the potential cause(s) of disagreement, proposes changes and brings the adapted draft-recommendation into voting one more time.
9. The draft-recommendation is accepted now if more than 66% vote in favour.
10. If 66% or less vote in favour, step 8 is repeated.
11. The draft recommendation is accepted now if more than 50% vote in favour.

12. If there is no majority after 3 rounds of voting, the draft-recommendation will be withdrawn by the convenor.
13. All voting results will be reported in the recommendations manuscript.

If during the voting process uncertainties arise regarding numbers of persons voting in favour/against, or doubt arises regarding unbiased trends of opinion, voting will be repeated and continued in secret, using ballot papers, voting pads etc.

D. Procedure for existing recommendations

Background

The principal difference between a new recommendation and an existing recommendation (in an update process) is that an existing recommendation is a product for which a majority agreement has been obtained in a formal procedure in the past. This means that an existing recommendation cannot be rejected right away. However, evolving evidence and changing trends of opinion may justify a reconsideration of the text and content of an existing recommendation. Regular updates are therefore deemed necessary but changing existing recommendations (text and content) requires additional precaution.

Procedure in steps

1. A steering group discusses the results of a systematic literature review updating the new evidence in the literature and the (changed) opinions in the field, and decides if a change of recommendation should be considered
2. If so, the steering group prepares the text of a changed draft-recommendation.
3. The convenor provides the arguments of the steering committee to change or not change the existing recommendation in light of the new evidence and leads a discussion among the members of the task force.
4. At the discretion of the convenor, having heard the discussions among the experts, the following proposition is voted upon in the following order
Who is in agreement with changing this recommendation?
Who is against?
Who abstains?
5. Only if more than 75% of members of the task force votes in favour of changing an existing recommendation, the process of changing will continue, following the voting procedure for new recommendations, starting with the draft recommendation prepared by the steering group.
6. If less than 75% vote in favour of changing an existing recommendation, the discussion will be terminated, and the recommendation will not be changed.