Background: Clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) are designed to provide clinicians with recommendations for evidence-based interventions. Although these resources are available, research indicates many PTs fail to choose evidence-based guidelines during treatment, likely due to lack of time, resources, and generalized results. While there are many physical therapy CPGs in publication by various organizations around the world, CPGs may be of different levels of quality or difficult for clinicians to interpret.

Purpose: The purpose of this systematic review was to evaluate the quality of musculoskeletal CPGs from the Academy of Orthopedic Physical Therapy and develop a decision matrix for choosing evidence-based physical therapy interventions.

Methods: MEDLINE, PEDro, and SPORTDiscus databases were searched, while PTNow was also cross-referenced in the search. Articles were included if they meet the following criteria: musculoskeletal clinical practice guidelines developed by the AOPT within the past 10 years. Exclusion criteria included CPGs from other authors/organizations, non-musculoskeletal guidelines, and guidelines that did not use the AGREE II quality assessment tool. Data were extracted and developed into a matrix that includes musculoskeletal conditions, recommended interventions, and level of evidence for the interventions.

Results: The most-recommended interventions were therapeutic exercise and manual therapy, respectively. While many recommendations were given, few were of high-quality evidence.

Conclusion: Having access to evidence supporting optimal treatments or identifying non-beneficial treatments is important for clinicians in making decisions to guide patient treatment.

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