

WEAK recommendations – *should I care?*

Background

- **G**radings of **R**ecommendations, **A**ssessment, **D**evelopment and **E**valuation (GRADE) is a widely used rating system
- Several COG-endorsed supportive care guidelines have used the GRADE approach

GRADE *classifies*

Recommendations as **STRONG** or **WEAK**

and

Quality of the Evidence* as **VERY LOW, LOW, MODERATE** or **HIGH**

*Reflects the level of confidence that the estimate of an intervention's effect is correct

GRADE**Quality of the body of evidence**

High ⊕⊕⊕⊕

We are very confident that the true effect lies close to that of the estimate of the effect

Moderate ⊕⊕⊕○

We are moderately confident in the effect estimate: The true effect is likely to be close to the estimate of the effect, but there is a possibility that it is substantially different

Low ⊕⊕○○

Our confidence in the effect estimate is limited: The true effect may be substantially different from the estimate of the effect

Very Low ⊕○○○

We have very little confidence in the effect estimate: The true effect is likely to be substantially different from the estimate of effect

GRADE**Strength of Recommendation**

Strong

Most people would want and should receive the recommended course of action. The recommendation can be adapted as a policy in most situations.

Weak

There is a need for substantial debate and involvement of stakeholders in policy making. The majority of people would want the recommended course of action, but many would not. Clinicians should be more prepared to help patients to make a decision that is consistent with their own values.

GRADEwebsite: <http://www.gradeworkinggroup.org/>

In this module we explain what a **WEAK GRADE GUIDELINE RECOMMENDATION** is and how to integrate such recommendations into your practice

Because GRADE incorporates separate judgments of evidence quality and strength of recommendation...

High quality evidence does not necessarily lead to a strong recommendation

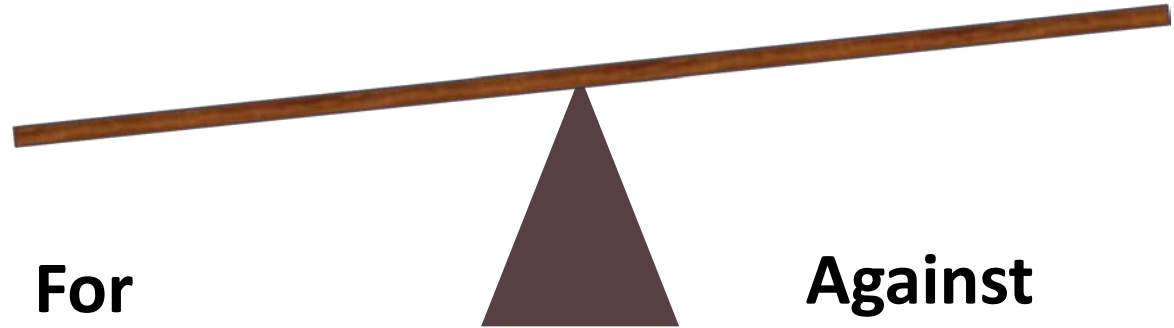
and

Low quality evidence does not always lead to a weak recommendation

GRADE

Weak recommendation

- Possible factors:
- Benefits and Harms
 - Quality of the Evidence
 - Values
 - Acceptability
 - Feasibility
 - Equity
 - Costs



If after weighing all factors, the guideline panel believes the desirable and undesirable effects are either:

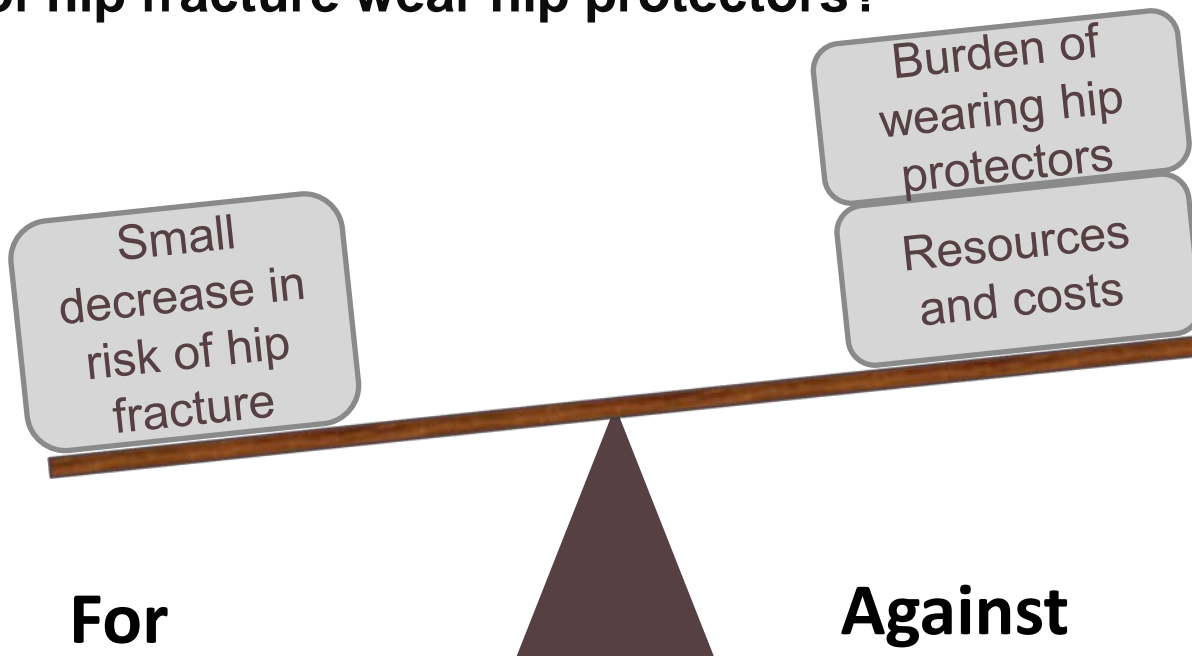
(a) finely balanced

or

(b) appreciable uncertainty exists about the magnitude of effects

the panel will make a weak recommendation

GRADE example: Should mobile adults in long-term care who are not at high risk of hip fracture wear hip protectors?



Weighing the factors:

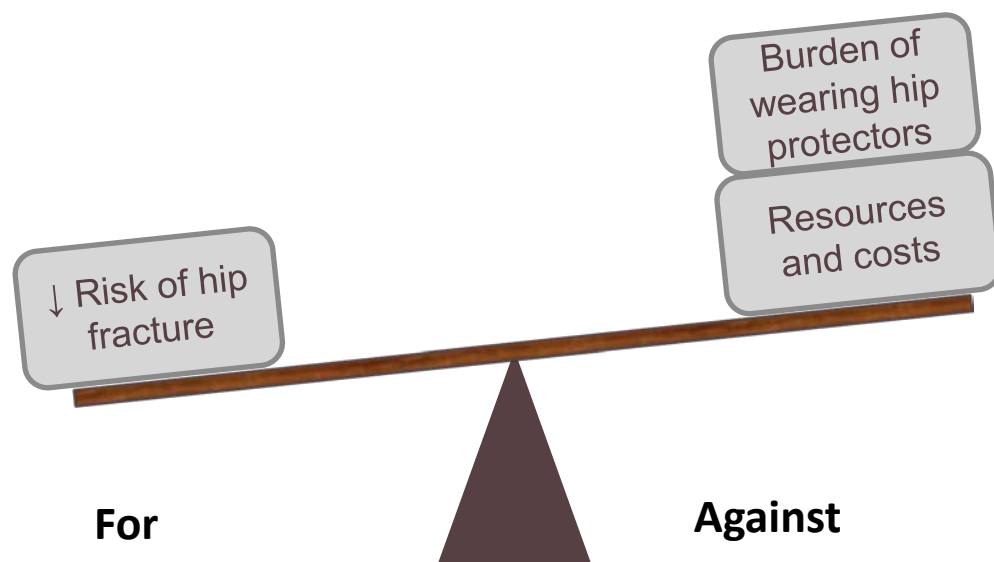
- Moderate quality evidence (i.e. moderately confident that hip protectors provide a small reduction in hip fractures in this population),
- However, they are burdensome to wear and there is a financial cost associated with their use.

The guideline panel placed a high value on avoiding the serious consequences of hip fractures and a lower value on the burden for an individual or for the long-term care home's resources.


A **WEAK recommendation** was made for adults in long-term who are not at high risk of hip fracture to wear hip protectors.

This means:

The majority of patients will want to use hip protectors, but some will not; clinicians will need to consider the conditions and patient preferences under which to recommend this intervention



Implications for practice

Implications	 recommendation
For patients	The majority of people in this situation would want the recommended course of action, but <u>some would not</u> *
For clinicians	Clinicians should recognize that different choices will be appropriate for each individual and that clinicians must help each individual arrive at a management decision consistent with his or her values and preferences. Decision aids may be useful to help individuals make decisions consistent with their values and preferences.
For policy makers	Policy-making will require substantial debate and involvement of various stakeholders.

*Modified wording slightly for clarity

Source: <http://www.gradeworkinggroup.org/>



Want to learn more about GRADE?

Visit: <https://cebgrade.mcmaster.ca/training/>

Acknowledgement:

Example courtesy of Dr. Nancy Santesso, GRADE group

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