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Background

Guidelines are an indispensable part of an infection control program, locally as well as nationally. Denmark has had national guidelines on many infection control issues since the late 1970s. Over time, however, developments in the healthcare system, emerging infections, structural changes, and input from abroad may have strongly influenced the need for and format of the guidelines.

Objectives

To describe how the development of Danish national infection control guidelines through 35 years was influenced by the needs and structural changes in the healthcare sector and other sectors in the period 1978-2013.

Method

Description and analysis from a historical perspective.

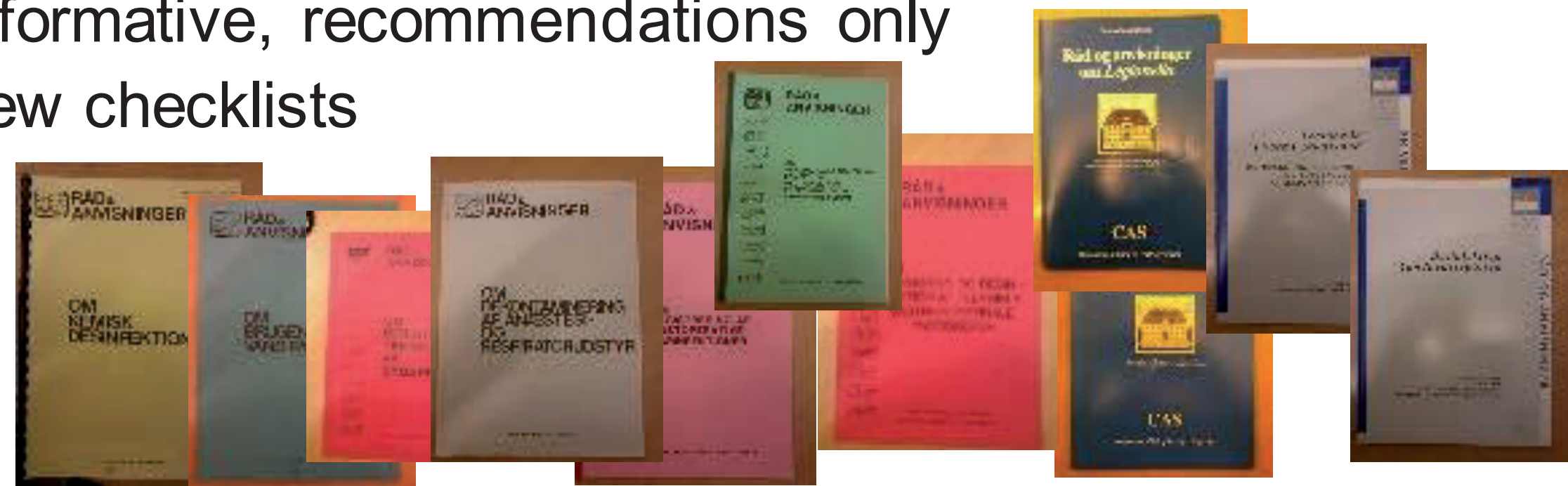
Results

The National Center for Infection Control (NCIC) has been the initiator and chief coordinator for three generations of Danish national IC guidelines since 1977: 1) Guidelines based on international and national consensus, 2) standards based on ISO standard principles and available evidence, and 3) evidence-based guidelines in a format directed at a diverse group of healthcare and infection control staff, easily readable, and freely available on the internet.

1st generation guidelines 1979-2004

“For guidance and implementation through local instructions”

- ☺ Topics prompted by needs (formation of national guidelines) and emerging diseases (e.g. Legionellosis, vCJD)
- ☺ Based upon relevant literature, experience and national consensus
- ☺ Made in collaboration between the NCIC, local ICPs, and clinicians
- ☹ Informative, recommendations only
- ☹ Few checklists



References

1) Jepsen OB. J Hosp Infect 2001; 47:262-265. 2) www.ds.dk 3) www.ssi.dk/infektionshygiejne 4) The Danish Healthcare Quality Programme, 2nd edition 2012, www.ikas.dk

2nd generation guidelines 2001-2013

1 management and 13 specific infection control standards (ISO concept)

- ☺ ISO concept prompted by increased focus on accreditation in the hospitals and positive experience from production of indicators in NCIC
- ☺ Topics selected by working groups' knowledge and interests
- ☺ Based upon literature, evidence and national consensus
- ☺ Made in collaboration between the NCIC, Danish Standards Association (DS), local ICPs, and clinicians
- ☺ Normative/informative, requirements obvious and clear
- ☺ Audit tools
- ☺ Good contractual tool for delivery of services (cleaning, laundry)
- ☺ Introduced and paved the way for quality management in Danish infection control
- ☹ No budget for revision/update/expansion
- ☹ Not freely available, DS copyright
- ☹ Difficult to read and understand for other than ICPs and ISO experts



3rd generation guidelines 2011-

National Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines

- ☺ All IC topics to be covered
- ☺ Commissioned by the Ministry of Health that has demanded a unified system of freely available guidelines
- ☺ Referred to by The Danish Healthcare Quality Programme
- ☺ Based upon evidence, international guidelines, and national consensus
- ☺ Made in collaboration between the NCIC, local ICPs, and clinicians
- ☺ Requirements (evidence-based) and recommendations
- ☺ Freely available on the internet
- ☺ Possible to link between different guidelines and to link to interactive educational material
- ☺ Easily readable for a broad group of healthcare workers and management



Discussion and Conclusion

The first generation of guidelines was the basis of the Danish infection control program and influenced by emergence of new pathogens; the second by quality management trends and instrumental in introducing audit tools and quality management in infection control in Danish hospitals, as well as excellent contractual tools for delivery of services such as cleaning and laundry. However, a unified system of guidelines, easily readable and freely available, combined with evidence base and audit tools, has been in demand by hospitals and the Ministry of Health, and this has resulted in the third generation guidelines now in production.