

TERMS OF REFERENCE

WHO MEDICAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CONTRACEPTIVE USE (MEC) 6TH EDITION AND SELECTED PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTRACEPTIVE USE (SPR) 4TH EDITION GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT GROUP (MEC / SPR GDG)

For nearly 25 years, the Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRH) at the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with relevant partners has produced global normative reference documents otherwise known as the Family Planning Cornerstones for use by policy makers and programme managers when developing their national policies and programmes, with the overarching goal of removing unnecessary medical barriers to contraception.

The first cornerstone, the *Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use* (MEC) provides thorough information and guidance on the safety of various contraceptive methods for use in the context of specific health conditions and characteristics. In this way the MEC offers national family planning programmes a comprehensive set of recommendations on whether a woman or man is medically eligible to use a contraceptive method. The last edition of the MEC (5th Edition) was launched in 2015 and may be assessed using this link.

https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/181468/9789241549158_eng.pdf?sequence=9

The *Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive Use* (SPR) is the second cornerstone and provides guidance on how to use contraceptive methods correctly, consistently, safely and effectively once they are deemed to be medically appropriate. The last edition of the SPR (3rd Edition) was launched in 2016 and may be accessed through this link:

<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/252267/9789241565400-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

In July 2012, WHO made a commitment to constantly synthesize evidence to inform family planning standards and guidance. Consequently, the SRH Department carefully monitors the publication of new relevant research evidence to keep these guidelines up to date with the state of knowledge in the field. Additionally, the SRH department periodically reviews opportunities to expand the scope of these guidelines with new recommendations, as appropriate, according to requests from Member States, or when new methods of contraception or new formulations become available, or if current recommendations require more explanation or stratification.

In line therefore with the requirements established by WHO's Guideline Review Committee, the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Department / Contraception and Fertility Care (CFC) Unit will develop the *MEC 6th Edition and the SPR 4th edition* to ensure that WHO recommendations on contraception are consistent with the latest scientific evidence and respond to the evolving needs of Member State's family planning programs.

PURPOSE

The Guideline Development Group for the revision/ updating of the *WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive use, and the Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive use* (GDG) hereafter referred to as **MEC/SPR GDG**, is a group of experts' external to the World Health Organization (WHO)

whose central task is responsible for overseeing the update and maintenance of WHO's evidence-based guidelines in family planning. To this end the MEC/SPR GDG will provide scientific advice and guidance to WHO on the technical content, organization, presentation, and dissemination of the *WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive use 6th Edition*, and the *Selected Practice Recommendations for Contraceptive use 4th Edition*. The MEC/ SPR GDG is chaired by a nominated expert and supported by a co-chair, methodologist, Evidence secretariat and a WHO steering group/secretariat.

Role of the MEC/ SPR GDG

WHO will convene an in-person meeting in June 2024 where role of the MEC/SPR GDG will be to:

- Appraise the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) evidence profiles from 7 systematic reviews commissioned by the GDG in November 2022 that summarize the evidence on specific PICO's that will inform the update of the MEC and SPR
- Advise on the interpretation of the evidence, with explicit consideration of the overall balance of benefits and harms.
- Using the Evidence to Decision framework and consensus-based approach, formulate recommendations considering benefits, harms, values and preferences, feasibility, equity, acceptability, resource requirements and other factors, while ensuring clarity and cohesion.
- Review any outstanding issues in existing recommendations not subjected to systematic review and make recommendations as appropriate to WHO
- Propose any outstanding research gaps in MEC and SPR, and Recommend to WHO a pathway for inclusion of new contraceptive methods into the MEC and SPR
- Highlight any implementation considerations for the updated MEC and SPR
- Review and approve the final guideline document before submission to the Guideline Review Committee (GRC)

Membership

The GDG comprises experts with extensive experience in Family planning/ contraception, public health, epidemiology, pharmacology, health systems, innovations and technology, health economics, primary health care, nursing and midwifery, reproductive endocrinology, policy formulation and strategic planning, costing, guideline development, research, and academia. Additionally, the GDG will have selected members that will provide user perspectives.

Members of the GDG are invited to serve in the guideline development group for the entire duration of the guideline development until completion. Members of the GDG participate in the guideline development process and at meetings as individuals and not as representatives of the institutions or organizations with which they are affiliated. Members of the GDG members will not receive an honorarium for their participation but in the event of a face-to-face meeting, travel costs and per diem will be reimbursed for experts external to WHO, if these are incurred.