

Policy and Procedure for Developing SMDM Position Papers on Methods

Board Approved 12/15/2008, Updated 3/22/2010

Background

The Society is interested in soliciting, preparing, and endorsing high quality guidelines, and position papers on a variety of methodological topics of relevance to the membership, and to the clinical decision-making and policy-making communities. For example, the first position paper drafted focuses on recommendations for the design and reporting of mathematical and simulation models for disaster preparedness evaluations. The position relates to methods (modeling) advanced by our members, while the application is an area of critical clinical and policy importance internationally (disaster preparedness). The objective of this endeavor is for the Society to leverage the expertise of its members to develop a set of landmark position papers for submission to *Medical Decision Making*.

The purpose of this document is to encourage interested members to participate in this process and to establish a set of guidelines for producing these documents. Because the position papers will be written by members volunteering their time for this effort, the Board wishes to facilitate the process to the extent possible by ensuring speedy turn-a-round when topics are brought to the Board for consideration and during the editorial process. However, neither approval by the Board of the topic nor acceptance by the journal will be guaranteed.

The SMDM Board of Trustees is assisted by the Issues in Methodology Group (IMG) to implement the policies and procedures for developing SMDM position papers.

Topic Selection

The topics addressed in these papers should generally be of broad interest to the membership and cover timely methodological issues of relevance. A key test of relevance is the likelihood that the position paper would matter to medical decision-makers (whether clinically or policy oriented), or to those who provide supporting information for their decisions. In addition, topics of interest may include those aligned with the theme of an upcoming Annual Meeting.

Topics may be selected in several ways:

1. *Member Initiated Research:* Individual or groups of members may select a topic of interest. This could, for example, occur within the context of the Special Interest Groups. If there is sufficient expertise and interest among these members, they may propose doing the work themselves. Alternatively, members may bring to the attention of the Board topics of interest and ask the Board to solicit members interested in doing the work. The mechanism for bringing topics of interest to the Board is through an email to the Executive Director.
2. *Society Initiated Research:* The Society, through the IMG, will consider key topics of relevance to the membership and solicit the production of position papers on these topics from the membership.

Development of a Working Group/Authorship Considerations

The IMG decides that a proposed topic, initiated in one of the ways detailed above, is in need of a SMDM position paper (via survey of IMG members).

Working Group: Once this decision is made, the IMG posts the topic on the web and emails the membership to allow members to volunteer for a working group. Members will have three weeks to sign up for membership in the working group (by registering through the web or by email to the Executive Director depending upon web capability at the time). The working group will provide input into the development of a proposal for review by the IMG, and if moved forward, presentation to the Board for a decision. Included in the proposal will be a plan for how the topic will move into the writing phase,. If the topic is approved, the working group will review and comment on the paper prior to publication.

Topic Proposal: IMG identifies an appropriate and willing person to take the lead for proposal of a given topic. This person's name will be posted on the web site and sent in an email. Members will be encouraged to apply for the topic writing group. Interested parties will be asked to submit a CV and one paragraph telling why they are qualified and identifying any conflicts of interest. The IMG selects and approves the writing group; the lead author does not approve co-authors but can make recommendations.

All members of the proposal writing group will clarify upfront any potential or real conflicts of interest in their participation in the effort. The proposal writing group will first prepare a brief (1-2 page) document for the Board and IMG that addresses the following questions:

- What are the key questions to be addressed in the position paper?
- Who are the proposed members of the writing group and what will each contribute to the preparation of the position paper?
- How will the key questions be addressed?

The IMG will review a working group proposal within one month of receipt of the proposal.

Review of Draft Proposal

The IMG reviews and makes a recommendation to Board on each position paper proposal that comes before it. Specifically, the IMG forwards the draft document from the working group with the IMG's recommendations for proceeding or not, and any further suggestions. Then, the Board either approves or not that it is an area where a position paper is needed and where SMDM members can offer insight etc. The Board may also offer further suggestions to the paper working group at this time.

The Board will make a decision within two months of receipt from IMG.

If approved by the Board, the topic writing team prepares a manuscript within 18 months of board approval and submits to *MDM* where it undergoes normal editorial process. During those 18 months, the draft paper will be presented at the SMDM Annual Meeting for discussion among the membership.

After initial reviews are back the manuscript is posted, with reviews, on a member-only part of the website. Membership is made aware of its availability and invited to comment. (Note: This step assumes that the reviewers believe that the manuscript has merit. If not, the Editor may choose to reject manuscript at this step.) While the manuscript is up for member comment, authors can spend that time to respond to reviewers. The comment time for members will be one month.

Board receives the manuscript, along with *MDM* reviewer comments (and responses if available) and member comments. Board votes whether to ratify the paper as a position of SMDM. All Board members will vote, and a majority is required for ratification. Board Members involved in authorship of the position paper must recuse themselves from discussion and voting.

Manuscript is published in *MDM* if accepted, as a position paper if ratified, as a regular article if not.

Document Format

The format of the content will be allowed to vary but the title should indicate that it is an SMDM Position Paper. The abstract and introduction (or methods as appropriate) should also mention SMDM and the process. In general, SMDM Position Papers should consist of two documents, a one or two page document for a general audience with a journal article as back-up. A list of the full working group should be included at the end of the paper.

Funding and Society Support

The Society will provide up to \$500 per position paper routinely to support incidental costs associated with the effort. The IMG chair will direct the funds. Members will be expected to donate the time required to produce the work. SMDM will provide conference call services and a password protected page on the SMDM website. SMDM may be able to use docs.google.com for sharing and commenting on documents. If additional funding is needed, a request must be made to the Board for review.

Presenting/Dissemination of Position Paper

To maximize the potential impact of the position papers, the Society will endeavor to ensure that the papers are widely available to members and non-members. In addition to publication of the text of the Position Paper in *Medical Decision Making*, the Writing Group will be expected to present their research, findings and position paper at the SMDM Annual Meeting during a special position papers session. The position papers will be featured in the Society newsletter and on the Website.