

□ Consensus Methodology

Consensus methodology refers to structured approaches used to achieve agreement among a group of experts or stakeholders, particularly when empirical data is incomplete or expert opinions diverge.

□ Main Consensus Methods

1. Delphi Method

- **Process:** Iterative rounds of anonymous questionnaires among experts. Feedback is shared between rounds.
- **Goal:** Converge toward consensus.
- **Applications:** Health guidelines, forecasting, policy development.
- **Advantages:** Anonymity reduces bias; allows remote participation.
- **Limitations:** Time-consuming; risk of participant drop-off.

2. Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

- **Process:** Structured in-person session. Ideas are generated silently, then shared and ranked.
- **Goal:** Rapid prioritization through voting.
- **Applications:** Needs assessment, guideline creation.
- **Advantages:** Promotes equal participation; fast.
- **Limitations:** Requires physical presence; no anonymity.

3. RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method (RAM)

- **Process:** Combines Delphi with systematic literature review. Experts rate clinical scenarios in two rounds.
- **Goal:** Assess appropriateness of interventions.
- **Applications:** Clinical decision-making tools.
- **Advantages:** Evidence-informed; highly structured.
- **Limitations:** Resource and time-intensive.

4. Consensus Conference

- **Process:** Public or expert panel discusses and issues a joint consensus statement.
- **Goal:** Incorporate diverse perspectives.
- **Applications:** Ethical issues, public health, biotechnology.
- **Advantages:** Democratic, transparent.
- **Limitations:** Complex logistics; unpredictable outcomes.

5. Modified Delphi / e-Delphi

- **Process:** Online version of Delphi; often with fewer rounds.
- **Goal:** Speed up consensus while maintaining rigor.
- **Applications:** Virtual expert panels, core outcome sets.
- **Advantages:** Efficient and accessible.
- **Limitations:** May lack depth or iterative refinement.

□ When to Use Consensus Methods

- Evidence is limited or conflicting
- Expert opinion is needed to guide practice
- Developing:
 1. Clinical practice guidelines
 2. Core outcome sets
 3. Ethical or policy frameworks

□ Reporting and Standards

- **CREDES** – for Delphi methodology
- **COS-STAD** – for developing Core Outcome Sets
- **AGREE II** – for guideline reporting quality

Feel free to adapt for specific projects (e.g. cranioplasty outcome sets or neurosurgical guidelines).

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