Objectives:

To learn to critically appraise clinical practice guidelines, and to apply the results to clinical practice, including:
1. Determining the clinical question the guideline is answering
2. Assessing the evidence, values, and preferences informing the guideline
3. Applying the guideline to clinical practice

Assignment:

1. Read the scenario
2. Read the attached guidelines for evaluating clinical practice guidelines
3. Critically appraise the attached article using the worksheet
4. Decide how you would respond to the problem

Clinical Scenario:

You are an orthopaedic surgeon in a community hospital. You are seeing a new patient in your clinic following referral from her family physician. The patient is a 51-year-old female who currently works as a high-school teacher. She reports mild to moderate right knee pain that has been slowly progressing for many years. In addition to pain, she describes the recent onset of an occasional catching sensation.

She is already taking NSAIDs 2-3 times per week and has tried one prednisone injection, performed by her family doctor, which provided some relief. X-rays of her right knee demonstrate mild joint space narrowing and osteophyte formation, consistent with osteoarthritis. An MRI, ordered by her family physician in response to the recent catching sensation, demonstrates a tear of the medial meniscus.

Due to the patient’s young age, you believe it is best to try to delay knee replacement surgery. While you are talking with the patient, she seems very frustrated with her lack of progress and expresses that she came to you because she had heard that arthroscopic surgery will provide relief. In your discussion, you advise against arthroscopic surgery, describing what you remember of a recent clinical practice guideline on the matter.
Enclosed Materials:


4. Worksheet for the evaluation of an article on clinical practice guidelines.