



Cited!

Dr. Bill Geerts

It's one of the most cited papers in medicine, and its lead author, Dr. Bill Geerts, calls the changes to clinical practice that it has inspired a gratifying reward for a 22-year career. "I'm not solving world hunger or curing cancer," he says, "but presumably fewer people are dying because of me." That's thanks to his leadership in producing the seventh "Prevention of venous thromboembolism: American College of Chest Physicians evidence-based clinical practice guidelines," the 2004 version of which was cited more than 2,200 times.*

Every three years since 1986, international experts have produced a set of guidelines for the management of venous thromboembolism (VTE), a potentially life-threatening disorder that includes deep vein thrombosis (abnormal clotting of the blood in deep veins, most

commonly in the leg) and pulmonary embolism (when a deep vein thrombosis travels into the lungs). The experts appraise the recent literature on the subject ("I'd bet my house there's not a single important paper we haven't covered," says Geerts) and make recommendations for practice. A Grade 1A recommendation is the highest level, with the number indicating the reviewers' strength of conviction about the reference, and the letter indicating the quality of evidence supporting it.

Geerts has led the guidelines on the prevention of VTE for the past 10 years, including the eighth edition, which was published in June 2008. "This is the most important contribution I've made in my career," he says, of his efforts to prevent blood clots in hospital patients. Sweeping an arm across 24 filing cabinet drawers that contain "virtually every paper on the prevention of VTE ever written," he admits to the trait that's made him the preferred author for the last four iterations of the guidelines: "I'm super-obsessive," he says. 

* Google Scholar, October 26, 2008.

Dr. Bill Geerts is a senior scientist in the discipline of clinical epidemiology at Sunnybrook Research Institute and director of the thromboembolism program at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. He is also a professor of medicine at the University of Toronto.