



Health Technology Assessment – providing an effective tool for better healthcare planning and decision making

Health systems over the globe face ever increasing competition for resources at the same time as technological innovation accelerates and citizens live longer. Citizen participation in decision-making cannot ignore the necessity to prioritise scarce resources across competing priorities. Knowledge transfer across borders and disciplines intensify and require integrated approaches that allow decision-makers at different levels to successfully deal with the complex pressures they face.

HTA was developed as an effective tool to assist in informing healthcare planning and decision-making on complex issues based on research. HTA is an interdisciplinary process that brings together the clinical expertise of professions and systematic and rigorous assessment of the research base with organisational and health economic analysis, and assessment of wider consequences for the individual and society. It takes in evidence multidisciplinary, pragmatism, and policy orientation - and recognises that results of research are necessary yet not sufficient to inform decisions.

The aim to inform decision-making necessitates the early involvement of various stakeholders' perspectives from the very start and throughout the HTA process. The European network for Health Technology Assessment, EUnetHTA, will seek HTA stakeholders' involvement to increase responsiveness of the HTA process to their needs.

General Recommendations/Conclusions:

1. HTA is a tool to inform the formulation of safe, effective health policies that are patient focused, seek to achieve best value, and promote patient access to innovative and effective health technologies.
2. Focal point for sharing knowledge and supporting coordinated HTA from the Member States respecting national and regional differences should be established on a permanent basis.
3. The stakeholder groups contributing to production or use of HTA reports should actively interact with those entities establishing the European HTA network and provide their views and constructive comments fostering responsiveness and transparency of HTA processes in Member States.
4. The European network for HTA (EUnetHTA) should contribute to the development of the high quality of HTA methodology and practical tools with increased general applicability across European borders, including New Member States.
5. EU and Member States should invest in the development of a permanent European HTA collaboration mechanism beyond 3-year project period (2006-2008).

Closing remarks

Health policy planning operating under budgetary constraints requires structured, transparent and research based input generated by several disciplines. The European Health Technology Assessment Forum that gathered wide spectrum of stakeholders confirmed the potential of health technology assessment to deal with complex issues faced by decision makers in health care.

Introduction of technologies simultaneously in several countries and knowledge transfer across borders highlight the need for European solutions.

Maturity of HTA methods at a European level has reached the point that it is possible to answer needs expressed by Member States and EU Commission to transform existing cross-border collaboration into a sustainable network.

Stakeholders agreed that to ensure responsiveness and effectiveness of the European HTA process EU and Member States should support a permanent and sustainable European HTA collaboration mechanism.

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