
HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT – FRAME AND PICTURE

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is the frame, which outlines the complex analysis of the emerging novel drugs, devices, procedures and organizational systems used in health care. HTA is still an innovation itself in Bulgaria. Therefore, picturing HTA is a challenging task as far as it is a multifaceted process. HTA by definition is the systematic evaluation of the properties and effects of a health innovation addressing the direct and intended effects of this technology, as well as its indirect and unintended consequences (INAHTA, 2016). The key method for HTA involves synthesizing available information, which has generally come to be called “systematic review” by the Cochrane Collaboration and other scientific entities. HTA is the common language that brings together the stakeholders - academics, medical researchers, physicians, economists, epidemiologists, patients’ organizations, ethicists, lawyers, etc. Consensus is sought on a value-based scientific analysis of the efficacy, effectiveness, safety and appropriate conditions for use of the various healthcare technologies. Metaphorically, HTA has the role of the conciliator in the potential conflict between the health demands and the limited public resources. The HTA mission is to support the political decision-making in health care because no country can provide health therapies for all patients for any condition for all time.

Historically, HTA developments are an answer to the growing scientific and social interests in health outcomes evaluation and to the rising costs in health care. The beginning of HTA was in the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment, which published its first report on the subject in 1976. In Europe, during the late 1980s, the Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care was initially formed. Internationally, the HTA concept is facilitated by many aid agencies, by the World Bank and the European Commission. Many pharmaceutical companies are strong supporters of the HTA approach. The universities also play a key role in the HTA processes. The industrialized world is already ahead in the application of the HTA methods and procedures. The poor countries, which often have the greatest need for critical assessment in order to make affordable investments in health technology, still have a limited basis for making such choices. Some countries in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and many countries in Asia also do not apply HTA procedures. Fortunately, Bulgaria shows a growing interest in the HTA field. Moreover, there is a political will and the national HTA program is framed and active. Since November 2015, the HTA process has been guaranteed both by a legal regulation and by an institutional structure and procedures. Currently, in Bulgaria HTA is applied as a process for ensuring access of medicinal products (Regulation No. 9 of MoH, Dec. 1, 2015).

This issue of *Scripta Scientifica Medica* (SSM) reflects medical topics related to novel therapies, devices and procedures, which provoke the development of the HTA processes. Oncology is the most dynamically growing therapeutic area (Tzvetanova et al.; Siderova et al.; Stoyanov et al.). The diagnostics and therapies of the systemic autoimmune diseases are also in the HTA focus (Radanova et al.). Amniotic membrane transplantation (Manolova et al.), hip arthroplasty (Mihov et al.), EndoButton technique (Burnev et al.) and vertebroplasty treatment (Kalevski et al.) are novel technologies, which need assessment regarding their efficiency and effectiveness. Certainly, there is always a reserved space for basic research and clinical case reports at SSM (Marinov et al., Mihaleva et al., Penev et al.). The current issue of the journal coincides with the celebration of the 55th anniversary of the Medical University - Varna! SSM is the oldest journal of the Medical University-Varna. It has been published since 1962. Welcome to the new issue of *Scripta Scientifica Medica*!

Desislava Vankova, MD, MPH, PhD,
ACRO, Medical University-Varna

Further information on HTA-theories and application:

INAHTA - <http://www.inahta.org/>

NCPHA - <http://ncphp.government.bg/>

CAHTA - <http://www.raredis.org/?lang=en>