OD39 Evaluation Of Sustainability And Environmental Impact Measures In Health Technology Assessment Of Medical Technologies In Europe: Starting An Important Journey

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Introduction: Reducing environmental impact and ensuring sustainable practices are important to the medical technology (MedTech) industry. However, it is unclear how these factors will be formally addressed by health technology assessment (HTA). The objective of this research was to understand what sustainability measures are required and included in HTA reports on medical technologies in five European countries (France, England, Germany, Italy, and Spain).
Methods: HTA guidelines, framework papers, and published HTA reports for devices were searched from January 2022 to November 2023 for inclusion of environmental aspects. Search terms included environmental sustainability, carbon footprint, greenhouse gas, and waste generation. Data were extracted into standardized templates and analyzed both quantitively and qualitatively for the inclusion of sustainability and environmental impact measures.
Results: HTA guidance on inclusion of sustainability and environmental measures is lacking. While some countries request the inclusion of these aspects in the HTA process, there is little detail on evidence requirements and how it will be evaluated. Of the over 450 HTA reports examined, less than 10 percent included environmental aspects, with most sustainability benefit claims made related to the reduction in waste or less resources used. Very few claims were supported by published evidence. This resulted in the exclusion of potential environmental benefits in final HTA recommendations. Costs associated with environmental impact of medical technologies were rarely assessed.
Conclusions: Current inclusion and evaluation of sustainability measures in MedTech HTA in Europe is nascent. While countries like England [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)] and France [Haute Autorité de santé (HAS)] have very recently made public statements regarding the importance of environmental impact, there is a growing need for detailed guidance on environmental evidence requirements and how these will be incorporated into the evaluation and decision-making processes.

OD41 Conducting Systematic Reviews On Rare Diseases: Lessons Learned From The European Reference Networks Guidelines Programme

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Introduction: A consortium of five Spanish health technology assessment (HTA) agencies conducted the European Reference Networks Guidelines Programme for the development, appraisal, and implementation of clinical practice guidelines aiming to support clinical decision-making in the field of rare diseases (RDs). In response to this objective, methodologists and information specialists conducted systematic reviews (SRs). This study aims to explore the barriers/facilitators they encountered.
Methods: A survey was designed to elicit HTA agencies' experience in developing SRs on RDs. Information was collected on the number of SRs conducted and the types of RDs and clinical questions addressed. In addition, they were asked to identify barriers and facilitators for each stage of the review (from the definition of PICO [population, intervention, comparator, outcome] components of the question to the issuing of recommendations). Finally, they were asked for process improvement suggestions. The survey was distributed by email and completed online. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify the issues identified at each stage of SR.
Results: A total of 111 SRs were conducted on 35 RDs. Most clinical questions were about diagnosis and treatment. The main barriers identified were lack of MesH (Medical Subject Headings) terms associated with the conditions, non-representative abstracts and keywords, lack of relevant information in the body of the articles, and reported data not allowing for quantitative syntheses or recommendations to be made. Facilitating aspects included Orphanet's specific source of RD documents and having expert clinicians in the working groups who were also involved in all steps of the SR.
Conclusions: Conducting SRs in the field of RDs is challenging. Authors of primary studies are encouraged to be more exhaustive in reporting the results. More research focused on the SR methodology in RDs is necessary to address their particular characteristics and obtain robust results. It is crucial to collaborate with reference networks to address RDs, where the evidence is scarce.

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