

## Preface

The present volume introduces a new series on “Innovation and Valuation in Health Care.” This series of publications will scrutinize relevant health care issues and their implications for rational policy making. The series will primarily focus on themes related to public health issues and the economics of health care delivery.

The series starts with a critique of a recent National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) technology appraisal, evaluating therapeutic options for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children and adolescents and providing guidance on the use of medication.

During the past decades ADHD has emerged as one of the most common diagnoses in children and adolescents. ADHD is of particular public health interest, as many of the consequences of ADHD are of a social and economic nature, for example affecting academic and professional achievement of patients. In this respect, ADHD manifests as a behavioral disorder associated with substantial long-term sequelae. The principal evidence-based treatment options for ADHD are pharmacotherapy and psychosocial interventions. While these have been shown to be clinically effective, their impact on long-term outcomes remains to be established. Not surprisingly, the NICE assessment team faced a daunting task during this review, involving innumerable choices at various decision nodes.

Informed health care policy recommendations hinge on the availability of high-quality systematic reviews summarizing the available evidence. Great efforts towards transparency, reliability, and scientific rigor have been implemented by NICE to arrive at sound and economically valid health technology assessments. Using the example of the NICE appraisal of ADHD treatment strategies, the present monograph illustrates how an economic evaluation may nevertheless fall short of delivering relevant answers.

It is hoped that the exploration of issues potentially underlying the problems associated with this technology assessment may stimulate debate about the further improvement of appraisal processes. This should be of interest not only to professionals including physicians and other providers of health care, as well as policy-makers beyond the United Kingdom, but also to patients (and their parents, in the case of children with ADHD).

Institutions commissioning and analysts authoring such technology reports are vested with particular responsibility for future health care delivery. At NICE, technology assessment reports greatly influence the outcome of the subsequent appraisal

process. Many policy-makers and health care providers will digest only the guidance ultimately issued by NICE and the abstracts of systematic reviews, like those from the Cochrane Library. Hence, a balanced presentation of conclusions, highlighting limitations and future research needs, is of paramount importance.

Health technology assessments (HTAs) may contribute to improvements of health care delivery. In order to provide valid input to prioritization problems, the methods of HTAs should enable using the best currently available evidence, and their economic component needs to reflect social values. We hope that this series will stimulate the debate about appropriate public health and health care policy recommendations, notably including their economic underpinnings.

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