

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) in Switzerland: The “SwissHTA” Multi-Stakeholder Consensus

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Background: Health Technology Assessment (HTA) initiatives in Switzerland have been fragmented and impaired by blurred boundaries between assessments and appraisals as well as by methodological issues.

Objectives: To use a transparent and inclusive process (“SwissHTA”) to develop a multi-stakeholder consensus on the future implementation of official HTAs in Switzerland.

Methods: Santésuisse (the national association of sick funds) and Interpharma (representing the interests of the Swiss research-based pharmaceutical industry) invited national stakeholders to participate in SwissHTA. The process was led by a project team, with membership from santésuisse, Interpharma, the Swiss federal government (BAG), the Swiss Medical Association (FMH), and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMW). After seven retreats of the project team and three workshops, which were supported by a scientific steering committee, the team reached a consensus that was endorsed by the participating organizations.

Results: Swiss HTA issued a consensus statement supplemented by six “implementation papers”, recommending a broad technology focus (covering both new and existing ones by specific processes following a common set of core principles) and defined opportunities for stakeholder involvement. Primary evaluation criteria should be driven by the social preferences of the Swiss population, constrained by a prior normative commitment in line with the rights-based legal tradition of Switzerland. The full range of health-related benefits should be evaluated. Assessment of clinical evidence should take into account the level of evidence that can reasonably be expected in a given context, rating the degree of confidence in outcomes in relation to the relevance and the magnitude of the effects observed. Economic viability should be evaluated based on budgetary impact and social cost-benefit ratios. SwissHTA rejects the idea of using cost per QALY benchmarks as a measure of value for money.

Conclusions: SwissHTA illustrates the possibility of a broad-based stakeholder consensus on HTA and offers well-defined evolutionary options.