

SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO INTEGRATE ETHICAL ANALYSIS IN HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AT THE HOSPITAL LEVEL

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OBJECTIVES

It is well recognized that ethical issues should be part of health technology assessment (HTA) to improve decision-making^{1,2}. However, there is no agreement on how ethics should be integrated in HTA. This project was aimed to develop an approach that consider ethical issues throughout HTA activities in the Centre hospitalier universitaire de Québec (CHUQ), a University hospital.

METHODS

A literature search was performed to find principles, concepts and methods related to ethical analysis in HTA. Furthermore, a committee of experts including physicians, nurses, and ethicist was established to assess the current hospital situation regarding ethical issues throughout the HTA organizational structure and production process³.

FINDINGS

Very few information on standardized methods to integrate ethical issues in HTA is available. HTA is value laden. It is well accepted that HTA decision should be evidence-based and transparent. Ethics is among the domains of evaluation in the HTA core model. It appears that ethical issues should be considered reflectively throughout the whole assessment production process as well as the organizational structure of HTA⁴.

Results showed that basic ethical principles (autonomy, beneficence / nonmaleficence, justice, and equity) are part of the organizational model and production process of the HTA unit in our hospital. Other methods for integrating ethical analysis in HTA were suggested to be applied into the steering and scientific advisor committees along with the production process.

These methods included the following:

1. Interactive, participatory HTA approaches.
2. Social shaping of technology.
3. Wide reflective equilibrium.
4. Precautionary principle.

A checklist was also adapted from the literature to support the integration of ethical analysis in the assessment production process from the planning stage to the HTA report¹.

CONCLUSION

HTA work is a value-judgement, therefore organizations must address in a pragmatic way ethical issues in both management and production process for the benefits of patients.

References

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Ethical analysis integrated into organizational structure and HTA production process in the CHUQ

