

Technology assessment in hospital settings

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Methodology for assessment

Technology assessment in hospital settings in Israel is based on the principle of the "classic" HTA model (Shemer et al 1993), integrating clinical, economic and social aspects. However, this unique setting of appraisal also takes into account the following considerations: physicians in hospital are considered to be "early adaptors", frequently involved and exposed to emerging technologies; many clinical and preclinical trials are performed in hospitals; and in addition, the seeds for start-ups and patents are planted. Hospitals are not "committed" to the national list of health services provided by the National Health Insurance law (NHIL, 1994), and may expand the use of new technologies within the limitations of their own budget. Following an internal decision-making process, the hospital management is forced to use a mechanism of prioritization that is flexible.

Several authors have attempted to cope with sets of criteria and toolkits (Lettieri, 2008, Greenberg et al...), yet a comprehensive international toolkit for the assessment of technologies in hospital settings has not been established.

Other players in the healthcare arena

The role of players in the healthcare system may change. Physicians play a major role in ranking the weight of clinical importance, but industry is predominant and may influence decision-making.

As patients are often in a critical or emergency state, the autonomy of the individual is less expressed. Nevertheless, shared decision-making may occur. Insurance companies and HMOs are involved in payments more than in choosing technology alternatives during hospitalization, unlike treatment protocols in a community-care setting.

Ethical Dilemmas

Many ethical dilemmas may arise when considering prioritizing medical technologies in hospital settings. Dilemmas following the implementation of new technologies in hospital setting are: the desire to adopt innovations vs expenditure, physicians' paternalism vs patients' autonomy, competition among suppliers and prestige within the framework of restricted budget.