

Best-practice guidance for the health technology assessment of diagnostics and treatments for COVID-19

As part of the HTx - Next Generation Health Technology Assessment (HTA) project funded by the European Commission, consortium members developed a best practice guidance to provide a set of consistent, pragmatic ways for HTA agencies to approach some of the key challenges they are likely to face when assessing COVID-19 technologies.

Since the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus and its associated disease (COVID-19) pandemic has placed healthcare systems in crisis, policymakers have prioritised rapid action in response to the pandemic emergency, taking little or no consideration of value for money.

However, with vaccination programmes being rolled out now globally, healthcare systems are starting to move away from the emergency approaches taken in the early pandemic, giving the space to healthcare systems with established HTA agencies to evaluate technologies for COVID-19. To support these agencies with consistent and pragmatic approaches, researchers of the HTx project have developed an interim best-practice guidance for the assessment of technologies for COVID-19.

Focusing on diagnostic and therapeutic technologies, recommendations of the guide are based on findings from a survey and workshop of HTA agencies, a workshop with health economic modellers, reviews of COVID-19 methods guidance, clinical guidelines, and economic evaluations, as well as a discussion with a multistakeholder group at a policy sandbox event.

“The guide recognises the challenges HTA agencies face in making decisions given the variable pandemic context, with rapidly changing disease characteristics, evidence, clinical practice, and pressures on healthcare systems and decision-makers. It also encourages them to be more accepting of different types of evidence to inform their assessments, using a responsive, “living” approach, where there is transparency about the evidence gaps and pandemic context at the time of this decision, and agreement that assessments will be rapidly revisited as new or better evidence becomes available.” Jamie Elvidge and Dalia Dawoud, the lead authors of the report, explain.

“This is an excellent example of a best practice that on one hand relates to the urgency that HTA agencies feel to get more actively involved in decision-making regarding COVID-19 treatments while simultaneously provides a real-life example for how to develop a life-cycle approach to HTA for complex and combinations of health technologies.” Wim Goettsch, associate professor HTA and coordinator of the HTx project said.

By adopting the recommendations of this guidance, HTA agencies can hopefully provide more timely, robust, evidence-based decisions about the value of COVID-19 technologies and seek to ensure efficient, affordable care for COVID-19 going forward. Further, this guidance should improve pandemic preparedness, providing a blueprint for HTA agencies to rapidly support decision making in response to a future pandemic.

The full report can be downloaded from [here](#).

HTx is a Horizon 2020 project supported by the European Union lasting for 5 years from January 2019. The main aim of HTx is to create a framework for the Next Generation Health Technology Assessment (HTA) to support patient-centred, societally oriented, real-time decision-making on access to and reimbursement for health technologies throughout Europe.

For further information on the publication, please contact HTx – Next Generation Health Technology Assessment at info@htx-h2020.eu or visit the HTx website at <https://www.htx-h2020.eu/>.



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