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Facts and values, HTA and ethics: two cultures or two aspects of the same thing?

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The challenge of health systems

- Health systems around the globe wish e.g. to maintain high quality, innovative, and sustainable health care while managing health care budgets, safeguarding equity, access and choice → role for Health Technology Assessment (HTA)



Health Technology Assessment

“A form of policy research that **systematically examines** short- and long-term consequences of the application of a health technology” (OTA, 1976)

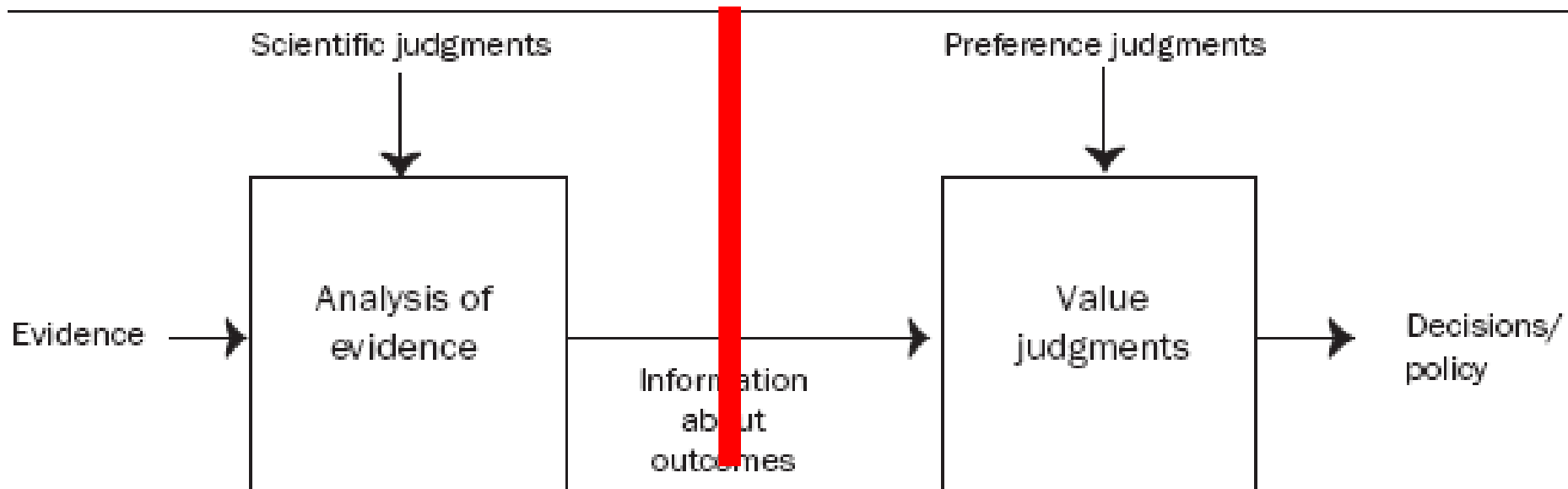
“A structured **analysis** of a health technology, a set of related technologies, or a technology-related issue that is performed for the purpose of providing input to a **policy decision**” (Banta, 1997)

HTA and ethics

HTA (and also EBM) is often perceived as value free.... “The founding disciplines of HTA are clearly scientific, and have been firmly based among the natural sciences.”

Sources: T. Wallay. Health technology assessment in England: Assessment and appraisal. Med J Aust. 2007;187:283-285; B. Hofmann, GMS Health Technology Assessment 2013, Vol. 9

Two Main Components Of A Medical Decision



Source: S.R. Tunis. Reflections on **science, judgment, and value** in Evidence-Based Decision Making: A conversation with David Eddy. In: *Health Affairs*, 2007; 26(4) w500-w515.

Facts and values

„Value judgments are indispensable to scientific practices such as defining research questions, making assumptions, setting significant thresholds, or balancing between the advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies (...) Scientific knowledge cannot be value free, but this does not make it any less scientific“

KW Fulford, 2006

Source: T. Krones, 2013 (KCE)

Relationship between ethics and HTA

- ‘Values’ **versus** ‘Facts’
 - HTAs provide facts; ethics judges facts
 - Ethical judgments create claims that can be tested empirically through HTAs

- ‘Values’ **and** ‘Facts’
 - Ethics contributes to how HTA is defined, implemented and interpreted, including **explicating underpinning values**

Source: A. Braunack-Mayer, HTAi, 2012

HTA and ethics

- Increasing awareness that developing, implementing, and using technology are not value-free acts
- Value judgments are judgments about what is *good* – things can be good in many ways
- HTA includes implicit knowledge, methodology, value framework – which?

Implicit value frameworks in HTA

- Focus on consequences and state of the art of (biomedical) medicine: Consequentialism and a positivistic understanding of science/rationalism
- Evaluation mainly based on empirical evidence
- Utilitarian approach, with or without additionally embedding societies/patients perspectives on technology outcomes/consequences through QALY, HYE, other survey measures,....,
- Main outcome focus on cost-effectiveness/utility of new versus established technologies

Source: T. Krones, KCE, 2013

Goals of HTA => value laden

- Justice
- Equal access
- Avoid practice variations
- Fairness
- Avoid wasteful health care
- Rationing
- Research allocation
- Prioritization
- Quality assurance / improvement
- Cost containment

Source: B. Hofmann, HTAi, 2013

Facts meet values

- Throughout the process of HTA:
 - Identification of technologies/diseases
 - Priority-setting
 - Assessment & Appraisal
 - Dissemination of HTA findings
 - Implementation of HTA findings

Source: E. Heitman. Ethical issues in technology assessment: conceptual categories and procedural considerations. *International Journal of Technology assessment in Health Care* 1998; 14: 544-566

Different actors make different decisions

Standard Treatment

- Costs: €100
- Cures: 10/20

New Treatment

- Costs: €120 per patient treated
- Cures: 11/20

A. Which treatment would you want as a **patient**?

B. Which treatment should a **policy maker** reimburse?

Actors – whose views and values?

- **Individual patient/health professional:** treatment with most health benefits
- **Healthcare system/policy maker:** treatment with best health benefits relative to costs
- **Payer:** treatment with lowest cost
- **Society:** treatments with health and social benefits relative to other uses of public funds

Also academia, industry, carers etc.

Key message

- Values are an integrated part of HTA – Ethics is an analysis of normative issues
- Integrating ethics in HTA....leads to a WIN/WIN situation....making HTA more open, transparent, and trustworthy, as well as promoting accountable and robust decision making

Further reading

REVEALING AND ACKNOWLEDGING VALUE JUDGMENTS IN HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

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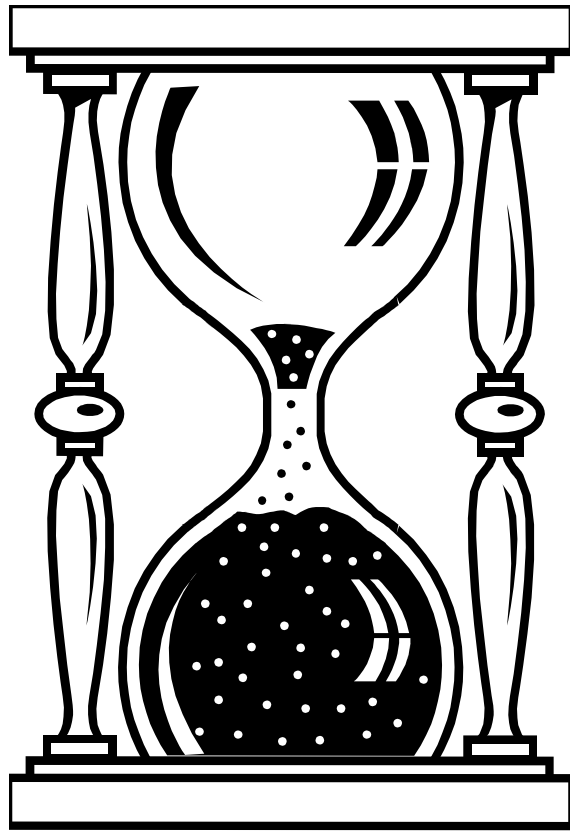
Background: Although value issues are increasingly addressed in health technology assessment (HTA) reports, HTA is still seen as a scientific endeavor and sometimes contrasted with value judgments, which are considered arbitrary and unscientific. This article aims at illustrating how numerous value judgments are at play in the HTA process, and why it is important to acknowledge and address value judgments.

Methods: A panel of experts involved in HTA, including ethicists, scrutinized the HTA process with regard to implicit value judgments. It was analyzed whether these value judgments undermine the accountability of HTA results. The final results were obtained after several rounds of deliberation.

Results: Value judgments are identified before the assessment when identifying and selecting health technologies to assess, and as part of assessment. They are at play in the processes of deciding on how to select, frame, present, summarize or synthesize information in systematic reviews. Also, in economic analysis, value judgments are ubiquitous. Addressing the ethical, legal, and social issues of a given health technology involves moral, legal, and social value judgments by definition. So do the appraisal and the decision-making process.

Conclusions: HTA by and large is a process of value judgments. However, the preponderance of value judgments does not render HTA biased or flawed. On the contrary they are basic elements of the HTA process. Acknowledging and explicitly addressing value judgments may improve the accountability of HTA.

Questions?



THANK YOU!

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