
COMMENTARIES, VIEWS, AND DEVELOPMENTS IN HTA

International meeting for HTA-emerging countries

March 4–6, 2009
Ankara, Turkey

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KDTD (Turkish Evidence-Based Medicine Association) hosted a conference on the subject of health technology assessment (HTA)-emerging countries in Ankara, Turkey on March 4–6, 2009.

Close to 300 national and international participants from twenty-four countries attended the meeting and the discussions; following were presentations by approximately twenty speakers. This international meeting was sponsored by the Turkish Evidence-Based Medicine Association in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Health, Turkish Social Security Institution, the Turkish Ministry of Finance and the World Health Organization, HTAi, INAHTA, and EUnetHTA. This unique gathering targeted improvement of HTA in HTA-emerging countries.

The idea of a meeting to gather HTA-emerging countries and discuss their unique challenges came up at the HTAi Montreal Meeting in July 2008. At that meeting, the HTAi Developing Countries Interest Subgroup was established. It is well-known and many times emphasized that developing countries are in most need of evidence for rational investments in health care; however, at the same time HTA is much less developed in these countries. It is also well-known that these countries have different priorities and, therefore, different challenges in the field of HTA.

This conference was attended by experts in the field from around the world, who have made a difference to the practice of health care in their settings, and were willing to share their experiences with others. The focus of the meeting

was on “Sharing Experience and Expertise.” It aimed at establishing a platform for discussion about the achievements, challenges, and progress in HTA in different countries, and also to strengthen contacts between HTA-emerging countries and already established agencies, institutions, and experts in the field. The meeting provided a great opportunity for all participants to exchange information on, for example, methodology, capacity requirements for HTA, suitable topics and issues related to diffusion, and impact of HTAs on health policy and practice. It also strengthened the links between all interested in HTA and provided a basis for both informal and possibly formal future networking between the many countries represented. The title HTA-Emerging Countries was chosen especially to emphasize and define the issues and the challenges, which countries in the stage of developing their HTA structure are facing. The following countries were represented at the meeting: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, India, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The conference contributed clearly to fostering a culture of HTA among HTA-emerging countries represented at the Ankara meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Mahmut Tokaç, General Manager of General Directorate of Pharmaceuticals and Pharmacies in Turkish Ministry of Health and co-chaired by Andrei Issakov, Coordinator, Health Technology and Facilities Planning (TFP), Department for Health System Governance and Service Delivery (HDS), at the World Health Organization. The meeting was opened by Ekrem Atbakan, Deputy Under-Secretary of Turkish Ministry of Health; Fatih Acar, Head of the Social Security Institution; and Murat Ugurlu, Deputy General Manager of Ministry of Finance. The meeting hosted many

decision makers from Turkish Ministry of Health, Social Security Institution, Ministry of Finance, State Planning Organization, Ministry of Treasury; healthcare professionals, academics, and industry representatives. At the international level, participation was mainly by representatives of HTA agencies or Ministries of Health, usually at the Director or CEO level, in addition to participation from the academia and industry.

We were indeed fortunate to have the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as leading HTA institutions and key experts from HTA-developed and HTA-developing countries, in this important initiative. The meeting was successful as judged by the participants and the lively discussions around the many topics discussed; for example, the global perspective on HTA, established international coordinating activities and networks, challenges for HTA-emerging countries, institution building for evidence-based informed health policy and practice, current activities at agencies in HTA-developed countries, and in HTA-emerging countries, organizational structures at established agencies, hospital-based HTA, payment for what works, HTA and reimbursement issues, and HTA in relation to pharmaceutical relations. Two workshops dealt with institutional

and technical capacity and networking to promote and sustain HTA.

The importance of better networking among HTA-emerging countries was deeply felt and it was very encouraging to note that international organizations such as WHO, HTAi, and INAHTA are ready to support such an initiative.

This meeting has become a major cornerstone in development of HTA in Turkey. It was the first international HTA conference to be held in the country, with great support from all stakeholders. The International Meeting was followed by the first National HTA Forum on the March 7, 2009, which included more than twenty panelists and 120 participants. The Forum, in addition to the International Meeting, was very helpful in raising awareness about and the need of improving HTA in the country.

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