

Health Technology Assessment (HTA): Status and Future Challenges in India

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What is Health Technology Assessment (HTA)?

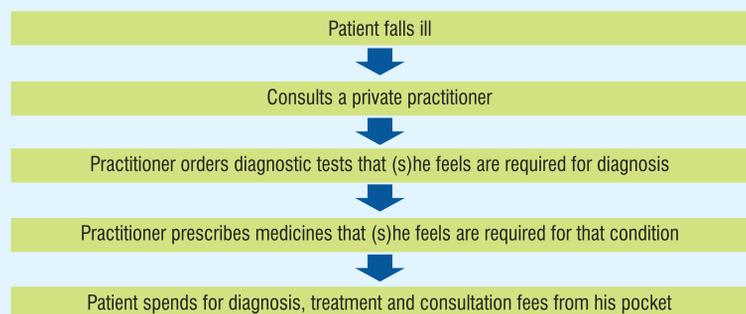
- HTA is a process of critical assessment (examining and reporting) of various properties of any medical technology used in health care
- Its primary objective is to provide 'Value for money' to the patients
- HTA focuses on two major questions: clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

Implementation of HTA can provide realistic solutions to many of the major challenges that affect the Indian healthcare system

Challenges in Indian Healthcare System

- Public healthcare system is crowded, unhygienic, lacks adequate qualified staff
- Private healthcare sector is highly expensive
- Burden of healthcare expenditure continues to increase**
- The out-of-pocket (OOP) spending of healthcare in India is as high as 82.2%, and 74.7% of this is spent on medicines
- Large medical expenses → catastrophic payments and financial toxicity → Many families are driven below poverty line every year¹
- Widespread negligence to the formulary concept
- Prescription from allopathic practitioner not mandatory for a patient to obtain prescription-only drugs in India
- Despite high volume of good quality pharmaceutical production in India, healthcare costs keep increasing²**

Current Medical Expenditure Model in India



Government Counter Measures are Ineffective

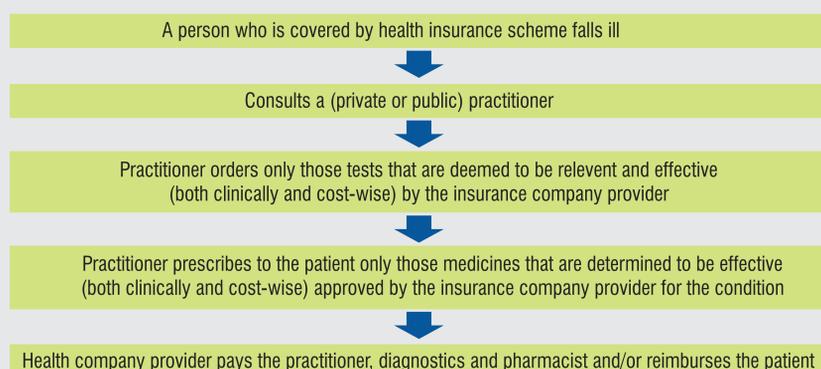
- Generic prescribing** → choice of the brand of a particular drug gets shifted from the informed doctor to the pharmacist → abundant scope of widespread corruption³
- Too stringent **price regulation** → reduced drug sale income to pharmaceutical companies → discouraged from involving in R&D
- A company producing a cheaper version of a drug might compromise on the quality of its product
- OPPI and IPA have moved to the High Courts, challenging the latest DPCO order to impose price regulation⁴

OPPI: Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India; IPA: Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance

What do the Stakeholders in Healthcare Delivery Chain Actually Want?

- Government:** All the people in India should get access to quality healthcare, and at affordable costs
- People:** Healthcare facilities should be of good quality, and affordable
- Pharmaceutical industry:** Profitable revenue should be generated from sales of their product so that R&D can be supported towards novel medicines, devices and diagnostic methods

Insurance Funded Healthcare System Model: Solution to the Problems



How can the Implementation of Insurance Funded Model Provide Realistic Solutions to Healthcare Sector Problems?

Problem	Solution
Ordering of unwanted diagnostic tests and drugs by prescribers → Increased OOP spending by patients	Prescribers will be compelled to order only those diagnostic tests and prescribe only those drugs which are approved by insurance provider
Pharmaceutical companies lure prescribers to prescribe their drug brands	Pharmaceutical companies will have to convince the insurance providers that their product is different and unique; prescribers can prescribe only those drugs approved by insurance provider
Pharmacists dispense dangerous drugs without prescription	Pharmacist payment also comes from insurance companies → drug dispensing without prescription falls
AYUSH practitioners prescribe allopathic drugs despite not having thorough knowledge	Prescriptions from authorized prescribers only will be reimbursed → Cross-system practicing will reduce
Formulary concept neglected	Hospitals will have to develop up-to-date formularies in collaboration with the insurance providers → National formulary will have to be brought out more regularly and more frequently

Reality Check: Health Insurance is not Popular in India⁵

- Despite the presence of ESIS and CGHS, the penetration of health insurance has remained low: only one-fourth of the country's population is covered by some sort of a health insurance scheme
- The existing insurance schemes in India are also ridden with flaws and shortcomings

For the insurance funded model to work properly, a strong and effective HTA system has to be in place

Status of HTA in India

- India lacks a commendable HTA programme
- India remains one of the few major countries in the world where a strong **HTA system** is not in place
- Many of the stakeholders in HTA are unaware of the whole concept
- Since an adequate HTA practice is not in place in India, adequate health economic evidence is lacking in many areas
- Policy making in India frequently depends on intuition and anecdotal experience, rather than on the evidence-based model

HTA is virtually absent in India

HTA has a key role in the Indian health system in providing quality healthcare to our population

HTA in India: Future Challenges

- High Level Expert Group report on Universal Health Coverage by the Planning Commission of India has highlighted the need for using economic evidence for policymaking in India⁶
- NICE International (UK), SIGNET initiative (Singapore), ISPOR-Indian chapter, HTA International, and PHFI have all organized workshops and conferences in order to provide sensitization in the branch of HTA to Indian policy makers and senior clinicians
- Government of India has recently collaborated with the NICE for developing a HTA board in India⁷
- Government of India is expected to launch a new social welfare scheme for health sector termed the National Health Assurance Mission⁸

Summary and Conclusion

The proper introduction of HTA assessment in the Indian healthcare system has the potential to realize the dream of delivering affordable and quality healthcare to the entire Indian population

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