



<b>Title</b>	<b>Comparison of Conference Abstracts and Presentations with Full-Text Articles in the Health Technology Assessments of Rapidly Evolving Technologies</b>
<b>Agency</b>	NCCHTA, National Coordinating Centre for Health Technology Assessment Mailpoint 728, Boldrewood, University of Southampton, Southampton SO16 7PX, United Kingdom; Tel: +44 2380 595586, Fax: +44 2380 595639
<b>Reference</b>	Health Technol Assess 2006;10(5). Feb 2006. <a href="http://www.hta.ac.uk/execsumm/summ1005.htm">www.hta.ac.uk/execsumm/summ1005.htm</a>

## Aim

To assess the quality and use of data from conference abstracts and presentations in health technology assessments (HTAs), compared to the full-text articles, in relation to the development of technology assessment reviews (TARs).

## Conclusions and results

Seven TAR groups completed and returned the survey. Five out of seven groups reported a general policy that included searching for and including studies available as conference abstracts/presentations. Policy and practice vary across TAR groups regarding searching for and inclusion of studies available as conference abstracts/presentations. There is also variation in the level of detail reported in TARs regarding the use of abstracts/presentations. Hence, TAR teams should be encouraged to state explicitly their search strategies for identifying conference abstracts and presentations, their methods for assessing these for inclusion, and how the data were used and their effect on the results. Comprehensive searching for trials available as conference abstracts/presentations is time consuming and may be of questionable value. However, there may be a case for searching for and including abstract/presentation data if, eg, other sources of data are limited. If conference abstracts/presentations are to be included, the TAR teams need to allocate additional time for searching and managing data from these sources. Incomplete reporting in conference abstracts and presentations limits the ability of reviewers to assess confidently the methodological quality of trials.

## Recommendations

Where conference abstracts and presentations are considered for inclusion in the review, the TAR teams should increase their efforts to obtain further study details by contacting trialists. Where abstract/presentation data are included, reviewers should discuss the effect of including data from these sources. Any data discrepancies identified across sources in TARs should be highlighted and

their impact discussed in the review. In addition, there is a need to carry out, eg, a sensitivity analysis with and without abstract/presentation data in the analysis.

## Methods

Evidence for this research was obtained from a survey of TAR groups, an audit of published TARs, and case studies of selected TARs. Analyses of the survey and audit results are summarized in a descriptive and tabular format. Data from the case studies are presented descriptively and quantitatively. Sensitivity analyses compared the effect of inclusion of data from abstracts and presentations on the meta-analysis pooled effect estimates by including data from both abstracts/presentations and full papers, and data from only full publications, included in the original TAR. These analyses were then compared with meta-analysis of data from trials that have been published in full.

## Further research/reviews required

Research is needed on the development of search strategies to identify studies available as conference abstracts and presentations in TARs. Since case studies in this report are limited, analyses should be repeated as more TARs accrue, or include the work of other international HTA groups.