

Scenario for INAHTA workshop at HTAi 2017

STEREOTACTIC RADIOSURGERY

A. Background to the assessment

The Agency for Rational Technology Evaluation (ARTE) provides advice on health technologies for a jurisdiction with a population of about 5 million. Some technologies are not available within the local health system. One of these is stereotactic radiosurgery (STR). Candidates for treatment with STR have been sent to centres in other countries.

The Health Ministry has been under pressure to expand the range of indications for which use of STR is approved and to fund a local STR facility. The Ministry asked ARTE to provide advice on:

- a. whether applications of STR for cluster headaches, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease and mammographic microcalcification were safe and effective, in comparison with other treatment options.
- b. the potential costs and effectiveness of establishing a local STR facility

ARTE undertook a systematic review of the literature on STR and a study to estimate the investment, operational and maintenance costs of STR and alternative treatments.

B. Assessment findings

ARTE found there were other, effective, treatments for those conditions and that the place of STR in their management was not established.

A high caseload would be needed for an STR unit to achieve cost savings for the local health system. Achieving such a caseload would likely require use of STR for treatment of conditions where evidence of its efficacy was very limited.

ARTE recommended STR should continue to be available to appropriately selected patients but not for treatment of headaches, Parkinson's, microcalcification, or epilepsy. Also, cost and caseload data did not support establishment of a local STR facility.

C. Follow up to the assessment

Follow up discussions between ARTE and Ministry officials indicated that the HTA report had been understood and its advice was appreciated. Officials agreed with the conclusions on a local STR facility.

Advice on "approved" indications was publicized in Ministry guidelines, with reference to ARTE's recommendations.

A media release by local hospital specialists, and a letter from them to ARTE, were strongly critical of the findings on use of STR for Parkinson's Disease and establishment of a local facility.

Following furious lobbying of the Premier, who as it happened had recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's, the government instructed the Ministry to find funds to support appropriate trials, expedite referral of patients with this condition to STR centres and to bring forward plans for an STR unit at a local teaching hospital.