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INAHTA Working Group Ethical Issues in HTA


Pre-conference workshop HTAi 2006



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Overview


- Who is INAHTA?
- Why establish a working group on ethics?
- What has been accomplished?
- What next?



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INAHTA's mission

To provide a forum for the identification and pursuit of interests common to HTA agencies (INAHTA website).



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Who is INAHTA?


- Created in 1993
- Select membership with fee
- 45 member agencies from 22 countries



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Structure


- Board; Elected Executive Committee; ad hoc working groups
- Secretariat located at SBU, Sweden



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Survey 2003


- Preparation for discussions at annual INAHTA Board meeting
- 36 agencies
- 92% response rate



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Survey results


- 80% regard ethical issues to be an integral part of assessments
- 50% explicitly include ethical issues in their assessment
- 25% have a system handling ethical issues
- ~20% have written guidelines



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Current practice

- 25% of the agencies perform separate assessments or assemble a group to peer review the HTA reports
- Most address ethical questions outside the HTA report through seminars, public debates, consulting activities and committee work (50% involve consumers)

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Terms of reference

1. Can there be a procedure for handling ethical issues concerning technologies being assessed?
2. If yes, what would such a procedure look like?
3. If not, why not, and what else can be done to assure good quality of the assessment of the ethical aspects of a technology?

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Terms of reference (cont'd)

4. What kind of ethical issues and questions are relevant with respect to a given technology?
 - Consequences
 - Duties
 - Relevant law
 - Human rights
 - Ethical principles (beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, autonomy)
5. How far should HTA go in:
 - a) Displaying values involved in the HTA-process itself?
 - b) Highlighting relationships between knowledge and norms?
 - c) Making recommendations with respect to ethical issues?



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Terms of reference (cont'd)


6. What is the relevance of addressing ethical issues with respect to achieving a successful dissemination?
 - a) With respect to professionals?
 - b) With respect to health policy?
7. What kinds of methods might be used to tackle these kinds of issues in an HTA, and how might INAHTA help to agree appropriate methodologies and quality checks?
8. What can be done to find or develop skills that would be required by HTA agencies undertaking ethical analyses?



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Ethics working group

- Belgium; Canada; Denmark; France; Netherlands; Norway; Spain; UK; USA
- Chair MD, PhD, OBYNG, Karolinska Institute, Sweden, chairperson WHO scientific and ethical review on sexual and reproductive health
- PhD ethicists; MDs; Theologians




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Report to INAHTA

The question of whether there can be a procedure for handling “*ethical issues concerning technologies being assessed*” can be addressed in many ways:


- moral consequences of HTA (itself),
- consequences of implementing a technology, and
- development of a technology (in relation to the health care system).



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Report to INAHTA (cont'd)


In summary, we do not believe that there can be only one method for handling ethical issues in HTA. To insist on a specific method (that it be principlism, virtue based, deontologically based etc.) perpetuates the conception that ethics can be dealt with separately from the evaluative process.



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Report to INAHTA (cont'd)


In our view, ethics is a **process** that shouldn't be reduced to the consideration of a set of values or principles in the abstract. Questions which are informed by principles may however elicit ethical reflection but this endeavor must remain a reflexive exercise of unearthing emergent ethical implications of technologies **by an integrated context sensitive analysis.**



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Survey 2006

- Select number of INAHTA agencies
- Main purpose to collect 'cases' or 'examples' to identify methods used to incorporate ethical analysis.
- 10/15 agencies responded




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Survey results

Brief overview:

- Questions on health services rather than specific technologies
- Ethical and social considerations identified in literature




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When is ethical analysis considered

Agency*	Prioritization	Initiation	Conducting	External review	After release	Impact
1		X	X	X		
2	?	X	X	X	?	?
3		X	X			
4		X	X	X		
5	X	X				
6			X			
7	X		X			
8	?		X			
9	X	X	X	X	X	
10			X	X		


*Ten agencies responded to the question: "At what point in the HTA project were ethical considerations discussed?"

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Who is responsible


Agency*	HTA Agency	External to HTA Agency
1	x (researchers)	X (experts academics)
2	x (researcher, bioethicist)	
3	x (ethicist)	
4	x	X (expert groups)
5	x	
6		X (consultant; decision makers, health policy makers)
7	x (senior medical officer)	X (ethicist)
8	x	
9	x (researcher ethical background)	X (consultant)
10	x	

*Ten agencies responded to the question: "Who is responsible for the ethics component?"

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Approach/Methods

Agency	Published literature	Consultation (ethicist)	Principles of ethics	Peer-reviewed (ethicist)	Primary research (survey interview)	Section in HTA (external ethicist)
1	x	x	x			
2	x	x	x		x	
3	x	x	x			
4	x	x	x			
5	x	x	x	x	x	
6	x	x		x		?
7	x	x		x	x	
8	x		x			
9	x	x		x	x	x
10	x		x			



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Next steps

- Analyses of each case example, identify the approach
- One pager of advantages and limitations of each approach
- Identify key decisions points in the HTA process where ethical analysis are a 'must'