Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Health Technology Assessment Policy and Methods Review Reference Committee

Communique – 22 May 2023 meeting

The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Policy and Methods Review (Review) Reference Committee (Committee) met by video conference on 22 May 2023.

Support staff from the Review Secretariat in the Department of Health and Aged Care (Department) attended. Representatives from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) were invited to speak to the Committee about medicines repurposing.

What did the Committee discuss?

Protocol for Webex forums for Consultation 1

The Committee discussed and agreed the protocol for Consultation 1 small-group Webex forums – which was framed around the questions on the Office of Health Technology Assessment consultation hub. The Committee identified the list of facilitators for the forums. The Committee agreed that it would acknowledge any previous submissions on HTA made in previous consultations and inquiries by organisations participating in the forums.

Forward meeting plan

The Committee considered dates for forthcoming meetings, deliverable dates for first drafts of expert papers and deep dives. The Committee discussed aligning deep dives (to be held with consumers, clinicians, experts, Committee members and industry each meeting) with topics that would be considered by the Committee when it receives draft papers so that each meeting is focussed on specific issues. The Committee agreed to starting to schedule deep dives and to discuss the forward meeting plan in more detail at the next meeting once expressions of interest for deep dives had been received.

Focussed discussion of issues

The Committee held a discussion focussed on the following two questions:

- Why don’t pharmaceutical companies offer more easily accepted proposals at first application for a product?
- Why don’t Australian HTA bodies more readily accept first proposals from pharmaceutical companies?

The Committee discussed what factors were relevant to these questions from company and HTA body perspectives, particularly for first in class medicines. The Committee considered the extent to which these factors would be captured in the research and analysis to be undertaken for the HTA Review.

Repurposing medicines

The Committee heard from representatives from the Department's Health Products Regulation Group on the status of repurposing medicines initiatives. The Committee heard that repurposing medicines was included as a commitment in the 2022-2027 Strategic Agreements between the Commonwealth and Medicines Australia and the Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association. The Committee also heard that the Government had committed $10.1 million over 4 years in the 2023-24 Budget to improve patient access to treatments by assisting medicine sponsors repurpose targeted medicines by expanding approval for their use in Australia. The Committee heard that the purpose of this initiative is to:

- address gaps in therapeutic options for a range of health conditions and patients
- give more patients access to effective medicines as off-label prescribing not consistently utilised
- reduce medico-legal risks to prescribers by increasing the number of approved treatment options available for use
- target medicines for which a significant public health benefit has been identified but there is little or no commercial incentive for a pharmaceutical company to pursue regulatory approval and PBS listing to make this use more accessible.

The Committee heard that the next steps for the initiative were to develop the framework and processes (in consultation with stakeholders), appoint a reference working group and identify promising and potentially viable candidates.