

Pre-conference workshop: Economic Evaluations of Public Health Interventions: Chances and Challenges; from basic methods to decision making

3rd European Public Health conference; Amsterdam, November 11th 2010; 08:30-11:30 hours

Organised by

ZonMw: the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)
Supported by the section of Public Health economics of the EUPHA

The pre-conference is open for researchers, health workers and policy makers interested in (information) on cost-effectiveness and use of cost-effectiveness research in decision making.

Background

Public health interventions are becoming more and more susceptible to health economic assessment. There is a growing demand to systematically include economic evaluations in the evidence-base for public health interventions, such as screening and vaccination but also for Health Promotion. In this meeting we will provide you with information on the specific requirements for Health Promotion and issues of cost effectiveness analyses in public health sector, such as outcome in health gain, societal benefits, thresholds, equity considerations, and research methodology. We will discuss the need for economic evaluations within a broader context of a regulated public health market. The outcome will help you to understand, appraise and use economic evaluations for decision-making in the public health sector.

Programme

Start of with coffee (8:30-8:45 min)

Maarten Postma (chair)

Introduction in public health economics by Werner Brouwer (8:45-9:15 hours)

Economic evaluations are a form of applied welfare economics and seek to inform decision makers about whether implementing some intervention will increase welfare in society. In the field of health such evaluations often take a particular method, i.e. cost-utility analysis, using QALYs as important (health) outcome measure. This introduction highlights the background of health economic evaluation, its common operationalisation and its decisions rules.

Improving lifestyles, tackling obesity: assessing the health and economic impact of prevention strategies, by Franco Sassi (9:20-09:50 hours)

In an attempt to contain rising trends in obesity and associated chronic diseases, many governments have implemented a range of policies to promote healthy lifestyles. These efforts have been hindered by the limited availability of evidence about the *effectiveness* of interventions in changing lifestyles and reducing obesity. Evaluations of the *cost-effectiveness* and *distributional impacts* of such interventions are even fewer and narrower in terms of numbers of options considered. An

economic analysis was developed jointly by the OECD and the WHO with the aim of strengthening the existing evidence-base on the efficiency of interventions to tackle unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles. The impacts of a range of policy options in a wide range of countries were assessed using a micro-simulation model. The presentation will address key results and their relevance in a decision-making perspective.

Why is economic evaluation in public health difficult; What lessons can be drawn from published economic evaluations in public health by Matthijs van den Berg (09:55-10:25 hours)

Cost-effectiveness is booming business in public health. Dozens of economic evaluations are being published every month. By order of the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports a knowledge-base on cost-effectiveness in public health has been built up during several years at the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment. This experience provides insight into the critical methodological choices made in economic evaluations in this field. Various examples will be shown to illustrate the specific issues that hamper interpretation and policy making. We will conclude with suggestions to deal with these problems.

Methods for assessing the cost-effectiveness of public health interventions: key challenges and recommendations by Helen Weatherly (10:30-11:00)

Increasing attention is being given to the evaluation of public health interventions. Methods for the economic evaluation of clinical interventions are well established. In contrast, the economic evaluation of public health interventions raises additional methodological challenges. The presentation identifies these challenges, based on a review of the literature and informed by an expert workshop, and provides suggestions for overcoming them. The existing empirical literature offers few insights on how to respond to the methodological challenges, however expert opinion suggests a number of ways forward. Policy makers will be mostly concerned with the consequences, in terms of resource use, for their budgets, and those of other public and private sector decision makers. A brief summary will be presented of practical recommendations for use of public health economic evaluations and the challenges faced.

Discussion (11:05-11:30 hours)

We will end up this meeting with a discussion with a forum of the speakers and the participants on the needs in further understanding, appraising and using economic evaluations for decision-making in the public health sector.

Affiliation speakers

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Pre-conference fee

•60 euro