HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENTS

Topic Prioritization Guide

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About This Guide

Health technology assessments (HTAs) play an important role in health policy decision-making to promote an equitable, efficient, high-quality health system. To support better health outcomes and patient and provider experiences, as well as increase efficiency of publicly funded health care services in Ontario, the Health Technology Assessment Program at Ontario Health uses scientific methods to analyze evidence and develop assessments of new and existing health technologies and health care services. The objective of these reviews is to develop recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Health on whether these technologies and services should be publicly funded.

This guide outlines the process through which Ontario Health decides which health technology assessment topics to prioritize for a health technology assessment review. This guide is updated periodically, and we welcome feedback on how we can improve our methods and processes at OH-HQO_HTA@OntarioHealth.ca.

For information about the methods and processes used to develop HTAs at Ontario Health, see Ontario Health's Methods and Process Guide.

Identifying Topics for a Health Technology Assessment

Topic suggestions for an HTA can be submitted through an open application system. Any person or organization may submit an HTA topic suggestion online at any time.

Topics are also identified proactively through outreach to Ontario Health programs, the Ontario Ministry of Health, health system partners, and HTA partners such as the Pan Canadian HTA Collaborative. The types of health technologies assessed include, but are not limited to: interventions, medical tests, surgical procedures, techniques and technologies, medical imaging, health care or screening programs, complex health system interventions, and interventions intended to improve health equity/outcomes for disadvantaged populations.

Technologies out of scope for a health technology assessment include drugs and vaccines as these types of technologies are reviewed by other agencies.

Prioritization Information Packages and Prioritization Framework

Developing a Prioritization Information Package for Topics Eligible for Prioritization

To facilitate the prioritization process, Ontario Health staff develop a prioritization information package for topics being considered for prioritization.

The prioritization information package is a high-level summary of the health technology. The information included in the package aligns with the domains of the prioritization framework (see below). Information for these packages is gathered from a variety of sources, such as through scoping the published literature, and speaking with clinical experts, health system partners, and the person or organization submitting the topic request.

Prioritization Framework

The framework used for the prioritization of non-genetic topics includes the following criteria:

- Clinical benefit
- Harms
- Cost-effectiveness
- Potential resource impact
- Diffusion pressures and stakeholder demand
- Impact and equity
- Potential receptors in the health care system

For genetic topics, the criteria in the prioritization framework were expanded to reflect the uniqueness of genetic technologies and issues needing explicit consideration. The expanded criteria for genetic topics map onto the prioritization framework above and include:

- Clinical benefit
  - o Potential to improve health outcomes or provide useful information to patients/families relative to the standard of care or alternatives
- Harms
  - o Potential to reduce harm to patients/families/caregivers relative to existing practice or alternatives
- Cost effectiveness
  - o Potential cost-effectiveness
  - o Potential savings to the health care system or other sectors
- Potential resource impact
  - o Potential to induce major change(s) to the health care system, clinical pathways, or specific groups of providers

- Diffusion pressure and stakeholder demands
  - Potential unmet need
  - Patients accessing health technology outside of publicly funded health system
- Impact and equity
  - Ethical implications for patients, families, and others affected by the test
  - Potential health equity impact
  - Alignment with societal preferences and values
- Potential receptors in the health care system
  - Ability of current processes of care, institutions, and care providers to implement the test

There is no ranking or weighting to specific criteria within the framework; all criteria are considered equally important aspects of an intervention.

The Prioritization Working Group, The Ontario Genetics Advisory Committee, and The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee

For non-genetic topics, the Prioritization Working Group and [The Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee](#) (OHTAC) advise on topic prioritization decisions.

The Prioritization Working Group consists of members of OHTAC, the Ontario Ministry of Health, and HTA program staff. The Prioritization Working Group applies the prioritization framework in a deliberative process to enable decision-making on the prioritization of non-genetic topics for an HTA. While possible topics may be submitted at any time, the Prioritization Working Group typically meets up to two times per year to review prioritization information packages and achieve consensus on a list of topics to recommend to OHTAC. OHTAC reviews all topics considered by the Prioritization Working Group and the working group's recommendations before finalizing the topics prioritized for an HTA.

The [Ontario Genetics Advisory Committee (OGAC)](#), a subcommittee of OHTAC, advises OHTAC on prioritization decisions for genetic topics. OHTAC reviews OGAC's recommendations before finalizing the topics prioritized for an HTA. While possible topics may be submitted at any time, OGAC prioritizes topics at least once a year.

Communicating Prioritization Decisions

Once topic prioritization is completed, selected topics are added to the queue for HTA development and Ontario Health contacts whomever submitted the topic to advise them on the status of the application. Topics that are not prioritized are re-considered for prioritization for at least one more prioritization cycle.

About Us

Ontario Health is an agency created by the Government of Ontario to connect, coordinate and modernize our province's health-care system. We work with partners, providers and patients to make the health system more efficient so everyone in Ontario has an opportunity for better health and well-being.

For more information about Ontario Health, visit ontariohealth.ca.

About the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee

How to Obtain Reports From the Ontario Health Technology Assessment Series

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