

Thursday, November 2nd from 12.00-13.00 in room K23: JTN4 - Public health economics: Join the network, Minutes from the JTN Meeting.

The Public Health Economics (PHEco) section of EUPHA has been quite active this year both by being part of submitting workshops for the European Public Health Conference in Stockholm and by advocating Public Health Economics in Europe. During the European PH Conference in Stockholm, the PHEco section has organised a join the network meeting where approximately 25 delegates have attended. It was a very fruitful and interesting meeting and some very clear outcomes came out of the meeting.

The proposed agenda for the PHEco Section Join the network Meeting has been as followed:

- 1) Recent Public health economics activities;
- 2) Initiative to join a Special Interest Group on "Economics of Obesity " joint with the IHEA (International Health Economics Association) (initiative by Dr Diana Sonntag);
- 3) Section activities/pre-conference at the EPH conference 2018 in Ljubljana;
- 4) AOB

1) Recent Public health economics activities

a) Activity related to the EPHC

This year the PHEco section has joined the HTA section and EUPHA Nxt to organise a skill-building seminar on how to address the economic impact of public health interventions. The PHEco has provided a very interactive skill building presentation where the audience was invited to provide input on key steps of the economic analysis. It was the first time that PHEco has provided such an interactive presentation and given the feedback received during the conference, the participants appreciated the presentation and the case study embedded in the presentation.

1.P. Skills building seminar: Skills building in HTA: how to address the economic impact of public health interventions

Organised by: EUPHA (HTA) (ECO), EUPHANxt

Health technology assessment (HTA) is proposed by international and national organizations as an indispensable tool to adequately confront the arrival of new technologies and rising costs in health care. It has come out as a crucial tool in modern public health, evolving from academic environment to the indispensable point in the decision-making process. The growth of HTA reflects the demand for reliable information to support the decisions in uptaking and dismissing of health technologies. Key factors for HTA further implementation are building human resources and implementing robust HTA methodology. HTA should be known, understood and used by all public health practitioners because health technologies represent the building blocks of healthcare systems. HTA requires multidisciplinary teams and adaptive human resources, representing different disciplines but having a common scientific language. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of HTA, present and future public health professionals should have a broad training in diverse research skills and understanding

of several topics and methods, as clearly underlined during the 9th European Public Health Conference in Vienna. One of the skills of a public health practitioners doing HTA is evaluating the costs and benefits of health technology because this is a requirement for an efficient spending and for guaranteeing sustainability. At the same time, also public health practitioners using HTA should know the economic jargon. It is indeed fundamental for PH practitioners to understand the importance of economic evaluations as part of a comprehensive public health decision-making process. This skills building seminar is an opportunity to continue building HTA capacity within EUPHA. Putting the accent in particular on the economic evaluation and its interface with public health expertise, this seminar will provide participants with the knowledge and tools to better understand the complexity and multidisciplinary of the HTA. We will begin with an overview presentation of economic methods used in the HTA, followed by two case studies on specific public health issues, namely healthcare associated infections and nutrition which will further promote an interactive discussion of the audience on several issue linked to the economic evaluation of public health interventions within the context of HTA.

Key messages of the workshop:

- HTA is a necessary tool for modern public health practitioners and skills building initiatives are needed, particularly when evaluating the costs and benefits of health technology
- Case studies on healthcare associated infections and nutrition will help attendants acquiring skills in understanding key elements of HTA reports, with particular emphasis on economic evaluation

(Almost) Everything you wanted to know on cost-effectiveness analyses of public health interventions: Tek-Ang Lim

Issue

There is a growing request to improve the efficiency of public health interventions from all stakeholders point of view especially considering a context where financial resources become scarce. Economic analyses can contribute to improve the efficiency of public health interventions by providing a methodology to determine the optimal allocation of resources or, phrased differently, to determine the most cost effective interventions given the resources available. This presentation in the context of a skills building seminar on HTA will propose a step by step process to understand how HTA is used within the methodology of cost effectiveness analyses (CEA) in order to support decision making. We propose to apply the step by step presentation of CEA of public health interventions to the field of healthcare associated infections (HAI). Each year in the European Union, according to ECDC, there is an estimation of over 4 million patients acquiring a HAI, with an estimate of almost 40 000 deaths directly linked to the acquired infection. This is a major concern across the world and there were many interventions proposed to eradicate HAI. One main intervention is related to hand hygiene. In this presentation, we propose to apply the CEA to the intervention of hand hygiene in order to prevent HAI.

Methods

This presentation will be an interactive presentation where the CEA methodology will be presented step by step and the audience will be engaged to help framing the issue. We will start by presenting the public health issue and work with the participants to determine what is the best solution to tackle the public health issue.

Lessons

In times of austerity, economic evaluations help to determine the most effective strategies and as such set priorities. However, it is essential to adopt a multidisciplinary approach in order to develop a more robust and comprehensive framework for health assessment in the decision making process.

The potential of daily nutrition as preventative health technology: Irene Lenoir-Wijnkoop

Issue

Food choices have a considerable potential to influence endlessly increasing healthcare costs. Nevertheless, even today health economic analyses mostly focus on the cost-effectiveness of drugs and medical devices in patients rather than targeting improved nutrition in large populations.

Methods

The presentation will illustrate how the impact of nutrition on various public health concerns can be estimated in spite of methodological difficulties due to the long time frame in which dietary patterns produce their effects. Established tools for the evaluation of the effectiveness of treatment interventions, such as randomized controlled trials, have a limited role in the assessment of complex health promotion strategies, and model-based approaches are required to translate the short-term outcomes measured by such evaluations into longer term effects to be expected at population level.

Results

Although it is generally acknowledged that the role of nutrition in acute and chronic diseases is extensive, public health interventions have offered variable results. Major hurdles exist, e.g. uncertainties related to causality and transferability of study results, the need to study whole foods or whole diets rather than single nutrients, the fact that food is part of lifestyle with its many environmental confounders, the absence of a clearly identifiable payer, and many others.

Lessons

HTA will be a key contributor in designing the appropriate framework for nutrition economic assessments to generate reliable data. Trans-disciplinary skill-building is needed to face the challenges of combining rationalism and empiricism, to offer new perspectives on the best way to take into account the particular characteristics of the field of nutrition and its underlying principles. This will not only facilitate evidence-informed decision making on efficient preventive strategies but will also serve as a support to enhance health literacy among citizens.

b) Activity related to advocacy on PHEco

In April 19-21. 2017, the president of the PHEco has been invited to the European meeting of Directors of National Public Health Institutes in Kyiv (Ukraine). The newly established Centre for Public Health in Ukraine hosted the meeting. It was a very important meeting for the Centre fir Public Health in Ukraine as it enables the Centre to share their challenges and issues with their counterparts in Europe. They have expressed a clear need for closer cooperation with us.

In May 29.-June 2. 2017, the PHEco has organised a training workshop during the ECDC Summer School in Stockholm. There were about 30 participants from the 28 Member States of the EU. The aim of the training workshop is to provide senior official in the Member States with key concepts to understand and discuss Economic Analysis of Public Health Interventions. It was a very interactive workshop starting with a presentation of key concepts of PH Economics analysis and then the participants has to work on a case study and perform the economic analysis on a real life situation of a communicable disease outbreak. This training has been on-going for 4 years now and is ranked with a very high score by the participants.

c) Activity related to publications

There is a joint EUPHA section initiative on writing a paper on Health Impact Assessment lead by Prof. Rainer Fehr where the PHEco has been part. In 2017, the joint paper has been published:

Rainer Fehr, Kristina Alexanderson, Carlo Favaretti, Judith de Jong, Giuseppe La Torre, Tek-Ang Lim, Piedad Martin-Olmedo, Odile C L Mekel, Kai Michelsen, Nicole Rosenkötter, Marieke Verschuuren, Chiara de Waure, Dineke Zeegers Paget; Health assessments for health governance—concepts and methodologies, *European Journal of Public Health*, Volume 27, Issue 4, 1 August 2017, Pages 609–616, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckx062>

Abstract

Background

For better supporting the science-governance interface, the potential of health assessments appears underrated.

Aims

To identify what various types of health assessment have in common; how they differ; which assessment(s) to apply for which purpose; and what needs and options there are for future joint development.

Methods

This review is based on five types of health assessment: monitoring/surveillance/reporting, assessment of health impact, of health technology, of health systems performance, health-related economic assessment. The approach is exploratory and includes: applying an agreed set of comparative criteria; circulating and supplementing synoptic tables; and interpreting the results.

Results

Two of the assessments deal with the question ‘Where do we stand?’, two others with variants of ‘What if’ questions. Economic Assessment can take place in combination with any of the others. The assessments involve both overall ‘procedures’ and a variety of ‘methods’ which inescapably reflect some subjective assumptions and decisions, e.g. on issue framing. Resources and assistance exist for all these assessments. The paper indicates which type of assessment is appropriate for what purpose.

Conclusions

Although scientific soundness of health assessments is not trivial to secure, existing types of health assessment can be interpreted as a useful ‘toolkit’ for supporting governance. If current traces of ‘silo’ thinking can be overcome, the attainability of a more unified culture of health assessments increases and such assessments might more widely be recognized as a prime, ‘tried and tested’ way to voice Public Health knowledge and to support rational governance and policy-making.

In 2015, the PHEco has organised a workshop on CEA of Childhood Obesity interventions, one of the papers presented during the workshop has been awarded the label of Editor’s Choice in Obesity Journal, you can find further information below:

Sonntag, D., Jarczok, M. N. and Ali, S. (2017), DC-Obesity: A New Model for Estimating Differential Lifetime Costs of Overweight and Obesity by Socioeconomic Status. *Obesity*, 25: 1603–1609. doi:10.1002/oby.21913

Abstract:

Objective

The aim of this study was to quantify the magnitude of lifetime costs of overweight and obesity by socioeconomic status (SES).

Methods

Differential Costs (DC)-Obesity is a new model that uses time-to-event simulation and the Markov modeling approach to compare lifetime excess costs of overweight and obesity among individuals with low, middle, and high SES. SES was measured by a multidimensional aggregated index based on level of education, occupational class, and income by using longitudinal data of the German Socioeconomic Panel (SOEP). Random-

effects meta-analysis was applied to combine estimates of (in)direct costs of overweight and obesity.

Results

DC-Obesity brings attention to opposite socioeconomic gradients in lifetime costs due to obesity compared to overweight. Compared to individuals with obesity and high SES, individuals with obesity and low SES had lifetime excess costs that were two times higher (€8,526). In contrast, these costs were 20% higher in groups with overweight and high SES than in groups with overweight and low SES (€2,711).

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that SES may play a pivotal role in designing cost-effective and sustainable interventions to prevent and treat overweight and obesity. DC-Obesity may help public policy planners to make informed decisions about obesity programs targeted at vulnerable SES groups.

Any member who wishes to share their publication and/or a publications they deem of high interest to the section members is invited to send the information to tekanlim@yahoo.com

2) Initiative to join a Special Interest Group on “Economics of Obesity ” joint with the IHEA (International Health Economics Association)

The International Health Economics Association (IHEA) has set up special interest groups in order to foster network dealing with very focus topics. One of the special interest groups is about “Economics of Obesity” which objectives are to:

- Enhance the understanding of the prevention and treatment of obesity from an economics perspective;
- Connect economists working in obesity from across the world;
- Share knowledge and provide support through the creation of a community of economists working together;
- Establish and maintain a database of existing projects that are about enhancing our understanding of obesity from an economics perspective;
- Host pre-congress and/or special organised sessions at iHEA Congress meetings that are about sharing knowledge and creating a research environment that are supportive and focused on increasing research knowledge and capacity;
- Offer shared mentorship and support for students and early career researchers working across different country contexts;
- Host international workshops to connect researchers; and
- Provide input to policy development at an international level.

This special interest group brings together members who are working in obesity to develop an understanding of obesity from an economics perspective. The group gather and share knowledge and build capacity working in this area. Our aim is to work together to enhance the profile of economics in obesity research. The special interest group forges links between individuals and groups with an interest in obesity from diverse country contexts and, where appropriate, provide input to policy development at an international level.

Diana Sonntag, our very active steering committee member, has proposed that we joined this special interest group. Given that the objectives of this interest group is very similar to the objective of the PHEco section, there is no objection in joining the special interest group raised by the section members.

3) Section activities/pre-conference at the EPH conference 2018 in Ljubljana;

One objective of our PHEco section is to bring together member in order to organise workshops before or during the EPHC. Selection of workshops submitted is a very competitive process given the very high number of high quality workshops. Hence, it is important to spend on time on defining the objective of the workshop as well as looking for synergies with other EUPHA section in order to increase the likeliness of being selected.

In terms of timing, it is good to have a few lines by December 2017 so that by mid February at the section council meeting, the proposals from the section can be presented and discussed with the other sections to find synergies and starting working on common proposals to be submitted.

The participants proposed to focus on:

- Investment for health
- Put your mouth where the money is
- CEA on childhood and adolescent health

Proposals to be sent to tekanglim@yahoo.com by early January 2018 please.

No AOB so the JTN Meeting is adjourned.