QALY or the Needs for a New Approach?

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Outline
- Requirements of a measure of health for resource allocation decision making
- How does the QALY stack up?
- Reflecting equity considerations in a measure of health
- Priorities for research

Requirements of a measure of individual health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Achieved?</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unidimensional</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Possible exceptions: e.g. mental health, paediatrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Yes, especially through the use of 'off the peg' preference measures (e.g. EQ5D).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Link with preferences</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Some strong assumptions: - Constant proportional trade-off - Additive independence - Risk neutrality - How often relevant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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How does the QALY stack up as a measure of individual health?

Existing alternatives to the QALYs as a measure of health

- Implicit judgement
  - Lacking transparency
  - Likely to be inconsistent
- Healthy-life equivalents
  - Need standardised means of describing health
  - Include their own assumptions
- Discrete choice experiments
- Contingent valuation
  - Limited use indicates lack of practicality

Decision making

Budget constrained health care system

Displaced services (Disease specific?)

Net health benefit associated with the new technology

Net health effects (unidimensional scale)

New technologies
- Positive health effects (disease-specific)
- Unintended health effects (not disease specific)

Possible exceptions:
- e.g. mental health, paediatrics.

Existing alternatives to the QALYs as a measure of health
The QALY as a measure of social preferences regarding distribution of health

“A QALY is a QALY is a QALY” (The ‘unweighted QALY’)
- Severity
- Lifetime health experience
- Rarity
- Non health-related disadvantage
- Short life expectancy
- Degree of ‘blame’

Those that gain health | Those that lose health
Generally known | Generally unknown

Analytical versus deliberative approaches

Explicit social weights
- Equity-weighted QALYs
- Opportunity costs
- Which characteristics?
- Would end of life matter?
- Whose preferences?
- Ready for prime time?

Deliberative?
- Other factors taken into account
- More nuanced
- Lacking transparency?

Conclusions

• Any criticisms of the QALY need to distinguish its role as:
  – A measure of individual health
  – A measure of “deservedness”
• QALY is not a perfect measure of health
  – Need to compare with alternatives
  – Provide evidence of when its limitations may a decision unreliable
• But methods research is required on health measurement and dealing with health distribution issues
• What are the priorities?

Deliberation informed by analysis

AC considers: “The magnitude of the additional weight that would need to be assigned to the QALY benefits in this patient group for the cost-effectiveness of the technology to fall within the current threshold range.”

http://www.nice.org.uk/media/E4A/79/SupplementaryAdviceTACEoL.pdf