

# Patient Voices in Health Technology Assessments: Insights From Singapore and Australia

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## Objective

To investigate the themes and trends in patient and carer input received during the health technology assessment (HTA) process in Singapore and Australia, and understand how these themes vary across different therapeutic areas.

## Background

- ◆ Patient input is increasingly recognised as an important aspect of HTA that helps ensure that patient perspectives are represented in the decision-making process. In Australia, comments from patient/carers have been considered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) since 2014;<sup>1</sup> in Singapore, the Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE) has invited patients/carers to share their lived experiences to inform HTAs since 2022.<sup>2</sup>

## Methods

- ◆ ACE technology guidance documents published between January 2023 and March 2025, and the 50 most recent PBAC public summary documents (PSDs) as of March 2025, were identified. Indication reviews, withdrawn appraisals and documents not reporting committee discussion were excluded.
- ◆ Included appraisals were reviewed for patient/carers input, and key themes were identified and extracted.

## Results

- ◆ A total of 96 appraisals were reviewed, majority of which (75%) reported patient/carers input. Comparing appraisals from the two HTA bodies, patient/carers input was reported in 29/46 (62%) ACE appraisals and 43/50 (86%) PBAC PSDs.

### Therapeutic areas

- ◆ Cancer and rare diseases were the most frequently assessed therapeutic areas in Singapore and Australia. Patient/carers input was more commonly reported in PBAC PSDs than ACE appraisals in these therapeutic areas. Specifically, all 12 cancer appraisals and 14/15 (93%) rare disease PBAC appraisals reported patient/carers input, compared to 13/19 (68%) cancer and 4/8 (50%) rare disease appraisals from ACE (Figure 1).
- ◆ Across both HTA bodies, all 4 neurological and 4 musculoskeletal disease appraisals included patient/carers input, whereas input was least common in infection and ophthalmology appraisals.

### Themes

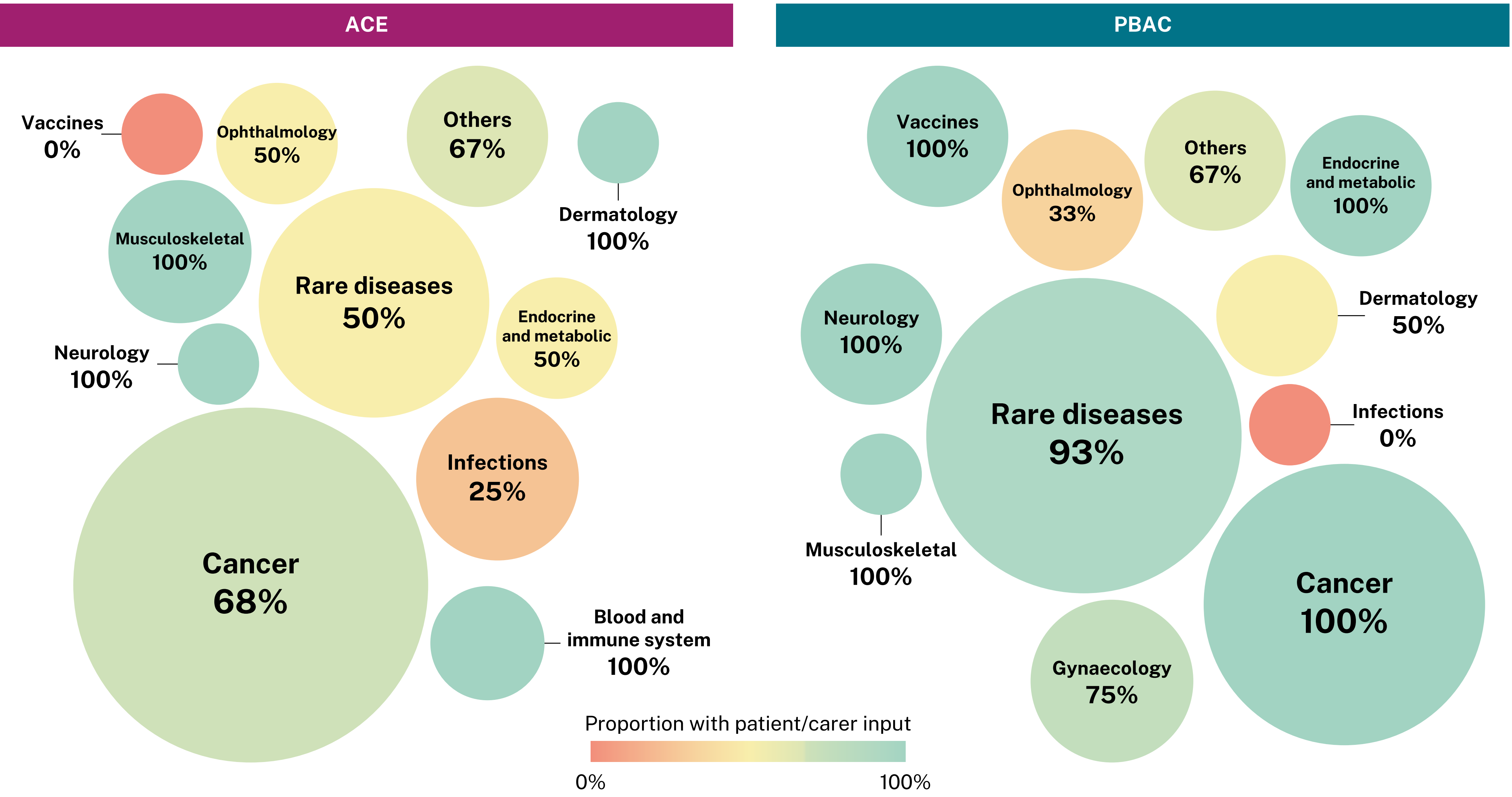
- ◆ Among ACE appraisals reporting patient/carers input, preferences for new treatments, affordability and treatment burden were frequently discussed in cancer indications (Figure 2A). Experience/expectations with proposed interventions were less commonly discussed, as most cancer appraisals evaluated new oncology products. All rare disease appraisals reported disease burden and experience with current/standard-of-care (SOC) treatments, while preferences for new treatments were less commonly discussed.
- ◆ In contrast, among PBAC cancer appraisals, experience/expectations with proposed interventions were the most common type of patient/carers input (Figure 2B). Disease burden was most frequently reported in rare disease appraisals.
- ◆ Affordability concerns were more often reported in ACE than PBAC appraisals. In over 70% of ACE appraisals across cancer, rare diseases and other categories, patients expressed that new treatments/treatments under consideration should be affordable. Among PBAC appraisals of the same categories, 21–59% noted patients’ concerns with affordability in the absence of subsidies for the proposed intervention.

## Conclusion

Patient input is commonly considered by ACE and PBAC. Cancer and rare diseases were most frequently assessed, with patient/carers input more commonly reported in PBAC than ACE appraisals. Themes such as treatment burden, preferences for new treatments and experience with the current SOC or proposed interventions were prominent. Affordability concerns were more often raised in ACE than PBAC appraisals. Further investigation is warranted to understand how patient perspectives impact HTA evaluation outcomes in the APAC region.

FIGURE 1

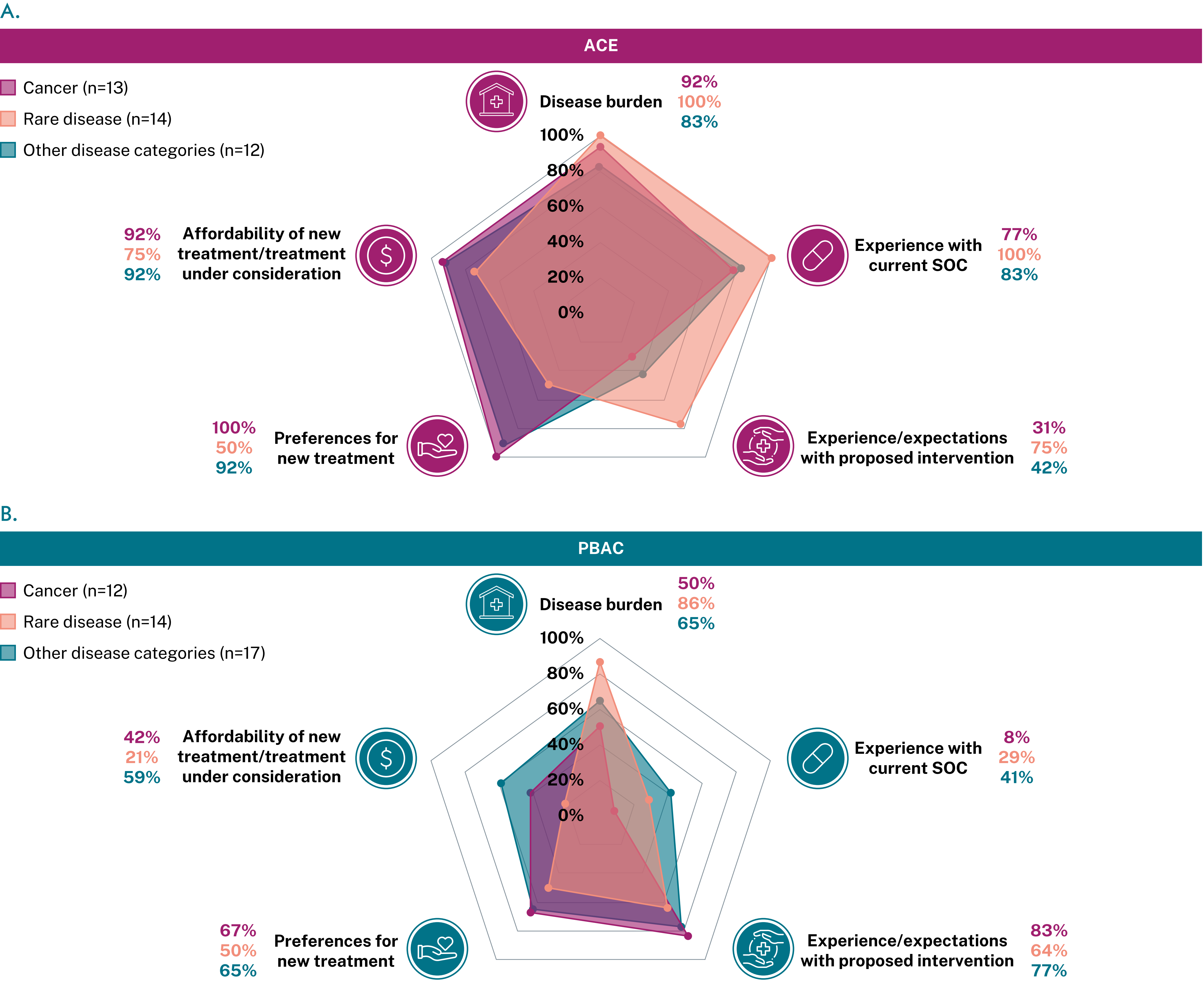
Appraisal volume and proportion with patient/carers input by therapeutic area



Bubble size is proportional to the number of appraisals for each therapeutic area. Bubble colour and percentage indicates the proportion of appraisals that included patient/carers input.

FIGURE 2

Themes raised by patients/carers across therapeutic areas



Abbreviations: ACE: Agency for Care Effectiveness; HTA: health technology assessment; PBAC: Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee; PSD: public summary document; SOC: standard of care.

References: <sup>1</sup>Tjeuw E, Wonder MJ. Analysis of consumer comments into PBAC decision-making (2014-9). Int J Technol Assess Health Care. 2022;38(1):e18; <sup>2</sup>Agency for Care Effectiveness (2023). ACE briefing on new patient involvement process. Available at: <https://isomer-user-content.by.gov.sg/68/4ae3c7fd-5a63-4581-9e2d-ff0687f0d572/20-feb-2023-ace-briefing-slides.pdf> [Last accessed 17 Jul 25]. Acknowledgements: The authors thank Niki Lim, Costello Medical, for graphic design assistance.