

Introduction

The World Health Organization has estimated that nearly a quarter of global deaths are caused by environmental pollution (1). With the healthcare sector contributing ~4–5% of global greenhouse gas emissions (2), and chronic disease prevalence rising (3), it is predicted that global emissions from healthcare will reach six gigatons/year by 2050, which is equivalent to the emissions from ~1.26 billion cars (4). As a result, environmental sustainability is becoming a key focus in healthcare.

The first step towards meeting environmental commitments is to measure the impact of health

interventions and integrate insights into decision-making frameworks. Environmental impact is a relevant domain for health technology assessment (HTA) agencies; however, there is no agreed decision-making framework, evidentiary standards needed to support claims, or marker for how decision outcomes will be influenced.

Objectives

The objective of this research was to explore the role of environmental impact within key global HTA agency decision frameworks to identify progress in incorporating environmentally sustainable decision-making in HTA.

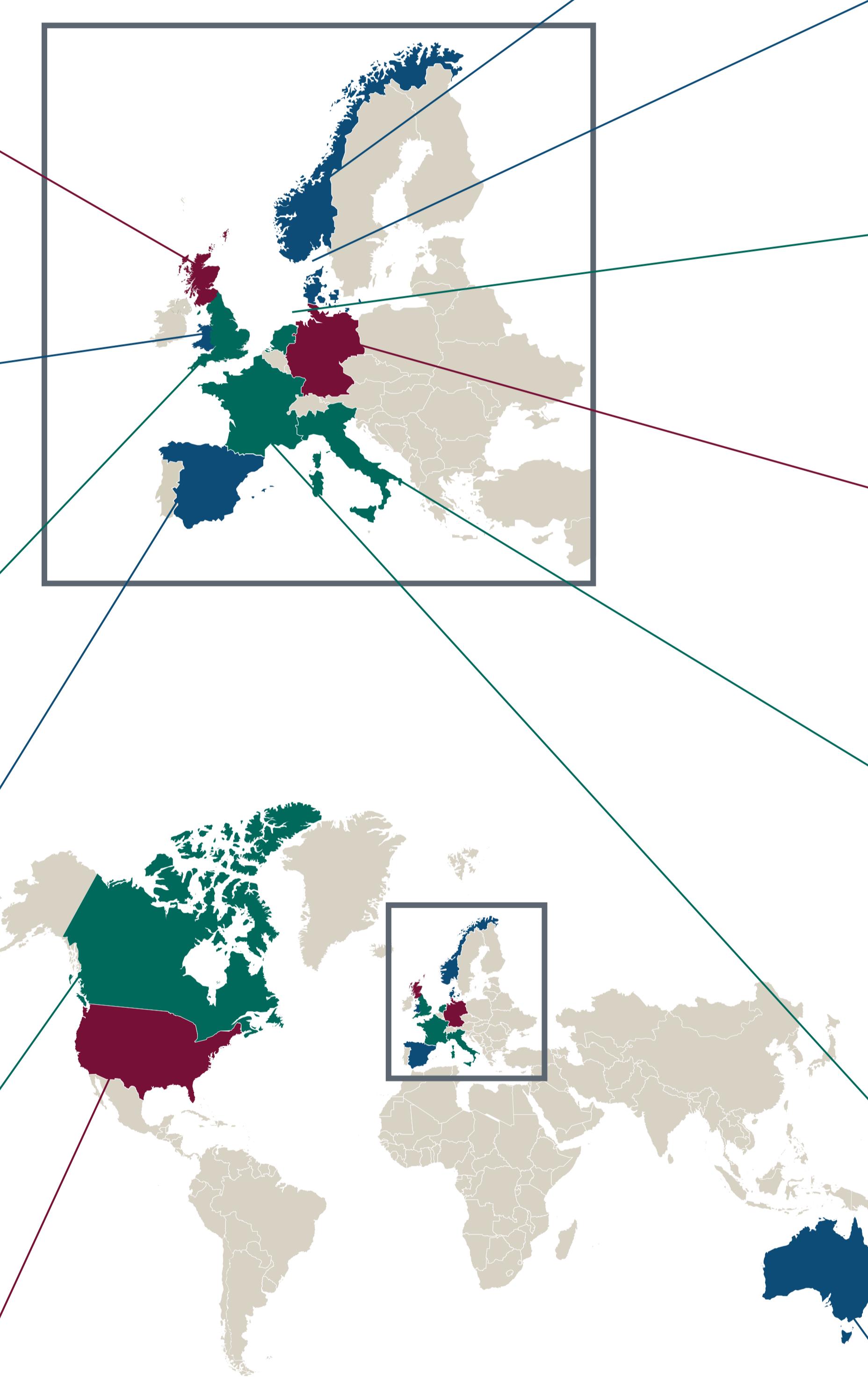
Methodology

A targeted review of 13 countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Spain, the Netherlands, US, and Wales) was conducted to assess progress in recognising environmental sustainability within healthcare decision-making. Agencies were qualitatively grouped into leadership categories (leader, follower, laggard) based on their objectives to incorporate environmental sustainability factors into their decision-making.

Information was sourced from HTA agency websites, government publications, and relevant policy documents.

Results

Across the countries reviewed, varying levels of progress have been made in incorporating environmental sustainability into HTA decision-making, with some agencies piloting formal methods while others are only beginning to explore integration. The map below presents these results, with colour coding used to illustrate the leadership category (leader, follower, laggard).



Key: Leader Follower Laggard

Conclusion

The environment and sustainability are becoming more prominent within healthcare decision-making, with targets and commitments being put in place globally to limit the environmental burden of healthcare. HTA is a well-established evidence-based framework that can offer a channel or means to embed environmental criteria into decision-making. Whilst meaningful progress is being made, there is still no agreed standard methodology or unified framework for evaluating environmental impact in healthcare. However, several countries have begun to incorporate environmental considerations into formal processes, offering practical models for implementation. To advance this, it is vital to actively share best practices to build a wider community of practice and promote cross-sector collaboration to accelerate progress.

Scan for
references



Abbreviations

AEMPS, Agencia Española de Medicamentos y Productos Sanitarios	GBA, Gemeinsamer Bundesausschuss	LCA, lifecycle assessment
AIFA, Agenzia Italiana del Farmaco	HAS, Haute Autorité de Santé	NICE, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
AWSMG, All Wales Medicines Strategy Group	HTA, health technology assessment	RedETS, Red Española de Agencias de Evaluación de Tecnologías Sanitarias y Prestaciones del Sistema Nacional de Salud
CADTH, Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health	HTERP, Health Technology Expert Review Panel	SIGN, Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network
CDA-AMC, Canada's Drug Agency	HTW, Health Technology Wales	SMC, Scottish Medicines Consortium
CO ₂ , carbon dioxide	ICER, Institute for Clinical and Economic Review	ZIN, Zorginstituut Nederland
	IQWiG, Institut für Qualität und Wirtschaftlichkeit im Gesundheitswesen	