Environmental sustainability in HTA: to what extent are HTA bodies considering environmental considerations in their decision-making?

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Highlights

- Context: The healthcare industry significantly impacts the environment, accounting for an estimated 4.4% of total CO2 emissions, with higher figures in high-income countries. This study examines how Health Technology Assessment (HTA) bodies integrate environmental considerations into their decision-making processes.
- Methodology: The analysis involved a keyword search on the IQVIA Market Access Insights platform, covering 2,848 HTA reports from eleven countries published between July 2023 and February 2025. The study assessed whether environmental considerations influenced the final HTA decisions.
- Key results and future implications: Only 0.6% of the HTA reports mentioned environmental considerations, with most related to drugs and procedures. Environmental considerations influenced the outcomes of one-third of these HTAs, mostly positively. The findings highlight the need for greater integration of sustainability assessments in HTA processes to support more sustainable healthcare practices.

Background

- The healthcare industry has a significant environmental impact, accounting for an estimated 4.4% of total CO2 emissions, with higher figures in high-income countries.
- Medicinal products and associated transportation are major contributors to the healthcare industry's environmental footprint. However, the extent to which health technology assessment (HTA) bodies consider environmental factors in their evaluations remains unclear.
- HTA agencies are starting to consider the environment as an additional criterium to traditional criteria. As an example, the Dutch Health Care Institute (Zorginstituut Nederland) published an advisory report in 2025 in which environmental impact is proposed as a new evaluation criterium in HTA.[1]

Objective

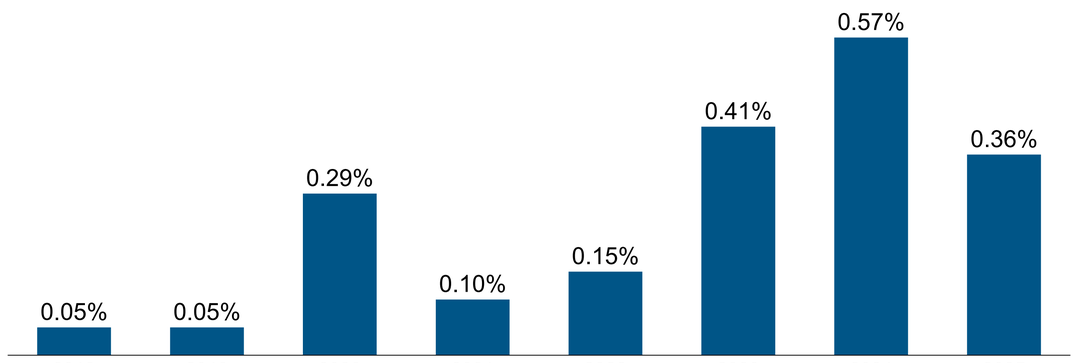
This study aimed to analyze HTA reports from various countries to assess how HTA bodies integrate environmental considerations into their decision-making processes.

Methods

This analysis builds upon a previous study.[2] An extensive search in the IQVIA Market Access Insights platform (previously known as HTA Accelerator) was conducted using 27 relevant keywords (e.g., carbon, climate, CO2, environment, sustainability) was performed to identify HTA reports that addressed environmental considerations. The analysis included HTAs from eleven countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States) and EUnetHTA published between July 2023 and February 2025. For the identified HTAs, we assessed if the environmental considerations had an impact on the final HTA decision.

Results

- A total of 2,848 HTAs published between July 2023 and February 2025 were screened, with only 18 (0.6%) mentioning environmental considerations. This is an increase compared to the previous study, which identified 14 HTAs (out of 9,493; 0.1%) discussing environmental factors published between July 2018 and June 2023 **(Figure 1)**.
- Most reports mentioning environmental considerations were related to drugs (9), followed by procedures (7), and medical devices (2) (Table 1).
- Australia had the highest number of reports mentioning environmental considerations (9), followed by Canada (2), France (2), Scotland (2), Spain (1), the Netherlands (1), the UK (1).
- Environmental considerations influenced the outcomes of one-third of HTAs (27.8%; 5 out of 18), with the majority (3 out of 5) having a positive impact.



	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025*
HTA reports analyzed								
N	2028	1867	1695	1995	2001	1968	1920	277
HTA reports mentioning environmental aspects								
N	1	1	5	2	3	8	11	1
%	0.05%	0.05%	0.29%	0.10%	0.15%	0.41%	0.57%	0.36%

*The year 2025 includes only the months of January and February.

Figure 1. HTA reports from 11 selected countries mentioning environmental aspects in 2018-2025.

Table 1. Overview of HTA reports published between July 2023 and February 2025 mentioning environmental considerations and the impact on the HTA outcome.

	HTA	Country (Agency)	Decision date	HTA type	Impact on HTA outcome	Note
1	Abdominal MRI for rare genetic conditions	Australia (MSAC)	12-7-2023	Procedure	No	
2	Rhenium-188 brachytherapy for non-melanoma skin cancer	Australia (MSAC)	11-10-2023	Procedure	No	
3	177-Lutetium PSMA i&t for metastatic castrate resistant prostate cancer	Australia (MSAC)	18-10-2023	Procedure	No	
4	Point-of-care testing for STIs	Australia (MSAC)	31-10-2023	Procedure	No	
5	Salflumix Easyhaler (fluticasone propionate/salmeterol) for asthma and COPD	Australia (PBAC)	15-12-2023	Drug	No	
6	Bufomix Easyhaler (budesonide/formoterol) for asthma and COPD	Australia (PBAC)	15-12-2023	Drug	No	
7	Radio-guided surgery using radioactive seeds I125	Spain (AETSA)	29-2-2024	Procedure	Yes	Negative
8	Nextstellis (estetrol/drospirenone) for the prevention of pregnancy	Canada (INESSS)	1-4-2024	Drug	Yes	Positive
9	Symbicort Turbohaler (budesonide/formoterol) for asthma	Scotland (SMC)	5-4-2024	Drug	No	
10	Xeljanz XR (tofactinib) for rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis	Australia (PBAC)	26-4-2024	Drug	No	
11	Digital pulmonary rehabilitation programmes for COPD	United Kingdom (NICE)	30-4-2024	Medical device	No	
12	Luxturna (voretigene neparvovec) for retinal dystrophy	Scotland (SMC)	7-6-2024	Drug	No	
13	Awiqli (insulin icodec) for type 2 diabetes	Canada (INESSS)	1-7-2024	Drug	Yes	Positive
14	PSMA-11 PET/CT-scanning for patients eligible for PSMA targeted therapy	Australia (MSAC)	5-7-2024	Procedure	No	
15	Emblaveo (aztreonam/avibactam) for various infections	France (HAS)	10-7-2024	Drug	Yes	Positive
16	Ryatlis (mometasone/olopatadine) for allergic rhinitis	The Netherlands (ZIN)	25-9-2024	Drug	Yes	N/A
17	Lutetium-DOTA-octreotate for various tumours	Australia (MSAC)	13-11-2024	Procedure	No	
18	Urgostart plus absorb dressings (renewal)	France (HAS)	28-1-2025	Medical device	No	

- #7 (Radioactive seeds I125 for radio-guided surgery): No formal HTA outcome but the executive summary mentions the importance of safe disposal of radioactive materials.[3]
- #8 (Nextstellis for the prevention of pregnancy): acknowledges that the less harmful environmental impact compared to comparators was one of the decision drivers.[4]
- #13 (Awiqli for type 2 diabetes): notes the potentially less harmful environmental impact of insulin icodec in terms of management of injection devices (reduced number of injection pens used and needles required per year) compared to other basal insulins.[5]
- #15 (Emblaveo for various infections caused by Gram-negative bacteria): mentions the potential environmental impact of using one combination tablet instead of two tablets.[6]
- #16 (Ryaltis for allergic rhinitis): suggests that climate change could have contributed to a rise in the occurrence of allergic rhinitis.[3] Consequently, the availability of more affordable treatments might result in greater cost savings than initially expected.[7]

Conclusions

The limited inclusion of environmental considerations in HTA reports highlights the need for greater integration of sustainability assessments in HTA processes. Incorporating environmental impacts into HTAs can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the overall value of healthcare interventions and support informed decision-making towards more sustainable healthcare practices.

References

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