

Bridging EU and National HTA - Bulgarian Oncologists' Perceptions of the Joint Clinical Assessment

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BACKGROUND

Since late 2015, Ministerial Order N9 has mandated new medicines to be subject to health technology assessment (HTA) for the Positive Drug List (PDL), which leads to National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) reimbursement.

The 2019 legislative updates strengthened Bulgaria's HTA framework, coinciding with the EU's introduction of the Joint Clinical Assessment (JCA).

This study examined Bulgarian oncologists' perceptions of how HTA and the forthcoming JCA may influence access to innovative oncology therapies (IOTs).

METHODS

A cross-sectional online questionnaire surveyed Bulgarian oncologists.

HTA protocols, clinical trial participation, and IOTs access were covered.

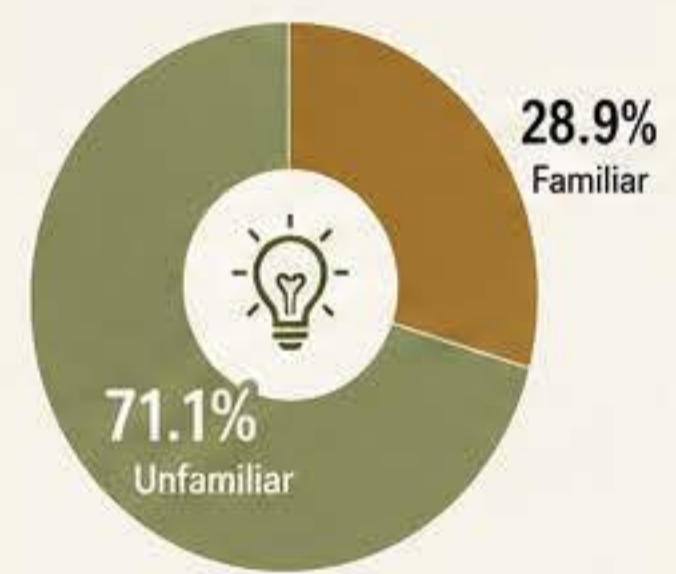
The survey was distributed from March to May 2025 in five rounds to optimize reach and response.

RESPONDENT PROFILE (n=115)

<p>44.7% Medical oncology postgraduate specialties</p>	<p>50.4% Female 49.6% Male</p>
<p>61.4% Employed in public healthcare</p>	<p>55.3% Treated solid tumors for >10 years</p>

RESULTS

AWARENESS OF THE JOINT CLINICAL ASSESSMENT (JCA)



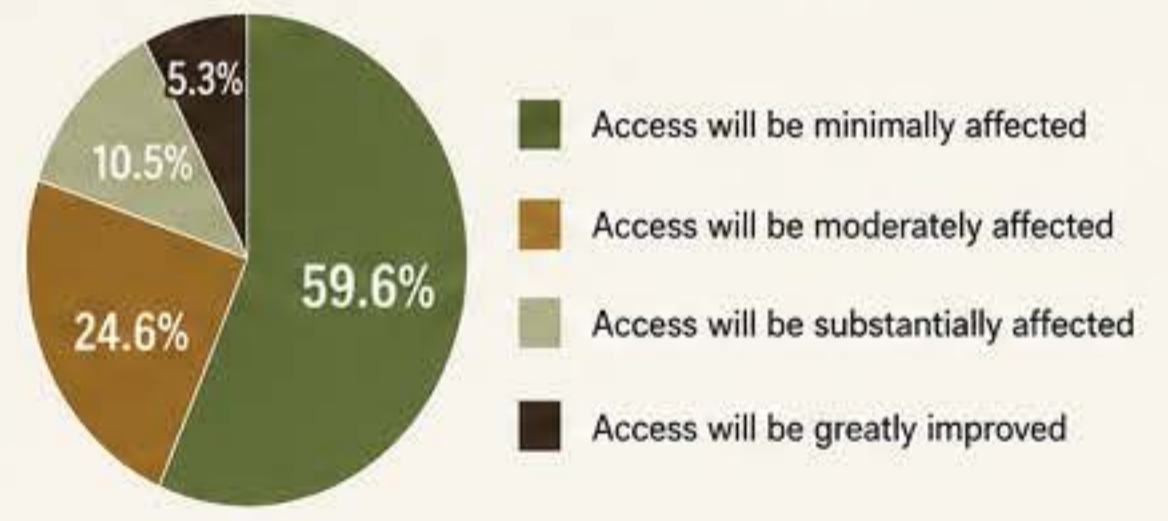
ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF JCA IMPLEMENTATION

% of oncologists

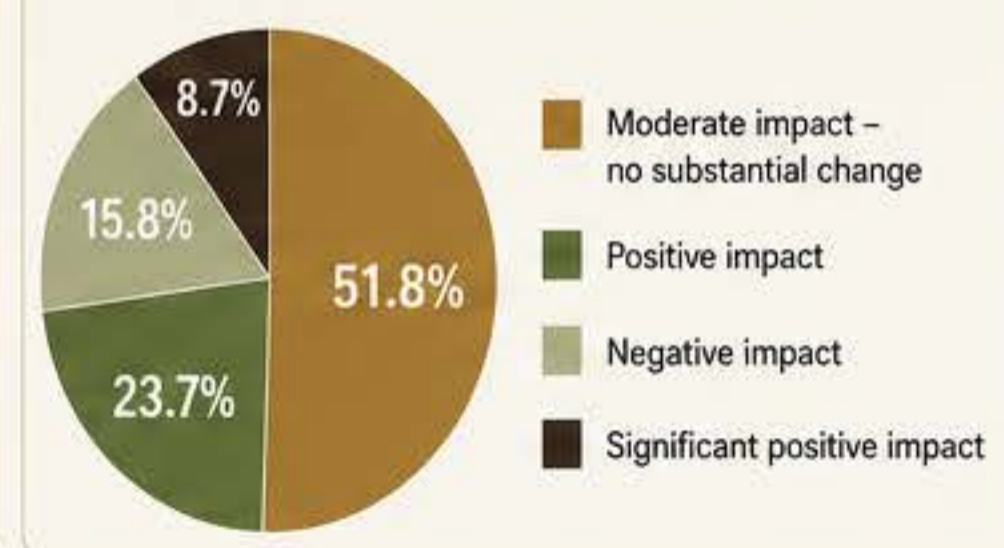


PERCEIVED IMPACT OF JCA ON ACCESS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Due to continued national responsibility for pricing and reimbursement



OVERALL IMPACT OF JCA ON ACCESS TO INNOVATIVE ONCOLOGY THERAPIES



Bulgarian oncologists anticipate only moderate benefits from JCA implementation, with limited impact on access due to national pricing and reimbursement control.



CONCLUSIONS

Although JCA is viewed as a potentially positive harmonizing mechanism, Bulgarian oncologists express cautious optimism.

Limited familiarity with JCA and expectations of only modest gains highlight the need for targeted communication, increased institutional preparedness, and clearer alignment between EU-level assessments and national reimbursement pathways

These steps are essential to meaningfully enhance access to innovative oncology therapies.

KEY MESSAGE

JCA holds promise, but meaningful improvements in access will depend on stronger alignment between EU assessments and national decision-making and reimbursement systems.