Economic Evaluation of Public Health Response to Covid-19: Is Health Economics up to the Job?

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Background

- In response to covid-19, governments applied stringent public health measures
  - School closures, bans on mass gatherings, hospitality closures, stay-at-home orders, travel bans
- Primarily driven by predictions of infectious disease models
- Economic costs discussed but not formally modelled
- No economic evaluation considering QALYs or willingness-to-pay thresholds were used, at least at the start of the pandemic.

Background

- Key reason was health economics did not have requisite methodologies.
  - Although time was also very limited
- Infectious disease models have been used to assess cost-effectiveness of treatments or vaccinations, but not “non-pharmacological interventions” such as lockdowns.
- New approaches to economic evaluation of covid-19 public health responses have since emerged.
- We will present these and future research directions

Discussants

Darshan Zala

ZALA PRMA Limited, Warwick, UK

Emerging economic evaluations of responses to covid-19

Marcus Keogh-Brown and Henning Jensen

LSHTM, UK

Computable general equilibrium modelling

Edith Patouillard

World Health Organisation

WHO perspective and the assessment of vaccination strategies

Anna Vassall

LSHTM, UK

Health and public policy perspective on presented methods

Polling your thoughts!

Question 1

Which of the approaches appear most appropriate for decision makers?

1. Cost-utility analyses linked to infectious disease models/data
2. Optimal control methods
3. Infectious disease models linked to GDP
4. Computable General Equilibrium models
5. CGE models integrated with health utilities

Question 2

What are the main areas health economists should focus their efforts?

1. Understanding correct threshold for decision making in pandemic response
2. Incorporating equity considerations
3. Better linking to infectious disease models
4. Better linking to macroeconomic outcomes
5. Better understanding uncertainty

Question 3

Is health economics up to the job of advising decision makers on optimal response to covid-19 and future pandemics?

1. Yes
2. Yes, but with a little work
3. Yes, but with a lot of work
4. No