Fulfilling the Promise of Equity in Value-Based Care: A Focus on Communications and Use in Health Technology Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

There is no value without equity. Effective decision-making must ensure that people involved, data and methods applied, and approaches to applying evidence all consider equity.

Recent policy developments, such as the Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program and changes to drug evaluation procedures in the EU, present new opportunities for Health Technology Assessment (HTA) to contribute to value-based care. However, this potential will remain untapped without an equity-centered approach to HTA.

Given the high stakes of these policy changes, and of healthcare decision-making overall, transparency and commitment to equitable processes are essential throughout the full spectrum of HTA use, from scoping and design to communication and integration of research findings into decision-making.

METHODS

Over 40 stakeholders were engaged through qualitative methods including key informant interviews, expert roundtables, and a Methods Summit. These engagements aimed to identify actionable changes for accountability in advancing health equity in HTA.
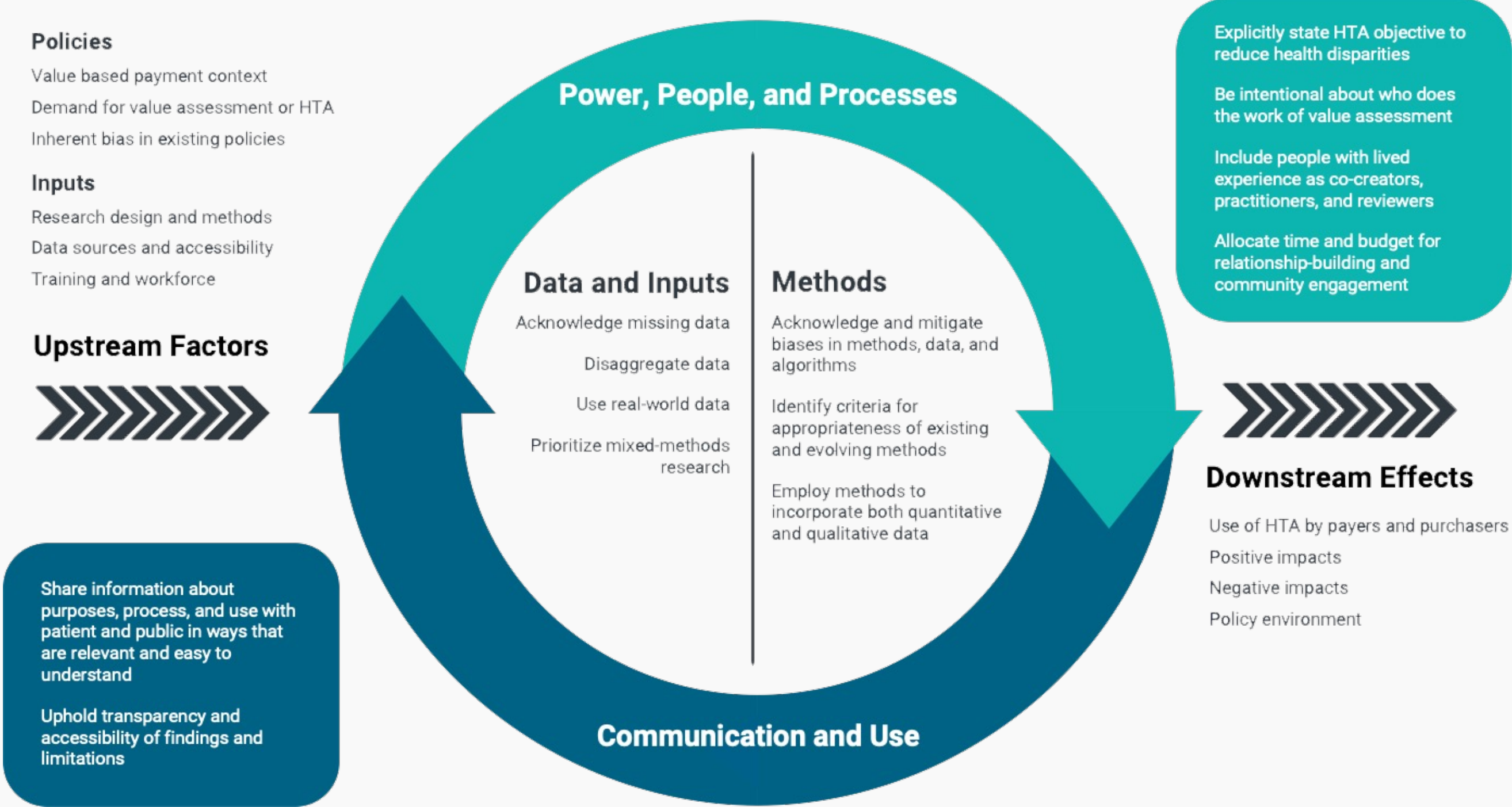
A comprehensive HTA equity framework was developed, addressing four key domains (**Figure 1**):

1. Power, People, and Processes
2. Data and Inputs
3. Methods
4. Communications and Use

This poster explores the **Communications and Use** domain, discussing opportunities and imperatives for communicating HTA in equitable and accessible formats, and explicitly using equity-centered HTA in healthcare decision making.

Figure 1. Health Equity in HTA Framework

OBJECTIVES

Health disparities are recognized as significant factors contributing to suboptimal health outcomes.

To be relevant in shifting decision-making contexts, HTA must consider health disparities and account for inequity.

The Center recently completed a 2-year Health Equity Initiative, dedicated to advancing actions that enhance how HTA incorporates health equity.

Objectives of this initiative included exploring communication strategies and defining the roles of diverse stakeholders in achieving equity-centered HTA.

Figure 2. Foundational Changes in HTA Communications and Use

Equity in **HTA Communications and Use** means that:

There is transparent communication throughout HTA conduct, reporting, and use.

Patients and decision-makers can understand and use HTA findings.

HTA practitioners discuss what is known and unknown about how health technology impacts different groups of patients.

HTA is part of a holistic and inclusive process for making healthcare decisions.

RESULTS

Traditional HTA communication has often been inaccessible to patients and caregivers. To advance equity in HTA, four foundational changes, along with respective accountability actions, have been identified to ensure effective communication of equity-centered HTA, including **transparent communication, understandable information, attention to diverse populations, and inclusive decision-making (Figure 2)**. Examples of specific accountability actions for six key stakeholder roles were developed, including patient organizations, professional association leaders, journal editors, payers and purchasers, research sponsors, and **researchers (Table 1).**

Table 1. Accountability Actions for HTA Communications and Use

Accountability Actions for Research Sponsors	Necessary Practice Changes for Researchers
RESEARCH SPONSORS • Make evidence of partnership with patients and caregivers a prerequisite for funding approval. • Encourage partnerships starting during proposal development and throughout HTA processes. • Encourage co-investigator and leadership roles for patients and caregivers in HTA research.	**RESEARCHERS** • Establish ongoing partnerships with patients and caregivers to inform research, form planning and scoping through analysis, synthesis, and application. • Outline clear roles for co-creation and how patient input is weighed in other inputs.
Transparent Communication • Fund scholarships for patients and caregivers to attend HTA-focused research meetings. • Require open access publishing for HTA research and include publication fees in research budgets. • Require that HTA reports include details of partnerships with patients and caregivers. • Require reporting on patient and caregiver engagement, including under-represented communities, throughout the HTA process.	**Transparent Communication** • Engage patients as co-leaders and partners throughout HTA conduct, reporting, and use. • Use a variety of channels beyond scientific publications to share information about HTA.
Understandable Information • Require development and dissemination of plain language summaries as part of all HTA final deliverables. • Provide funding for patient organizations to help develop and share HTA plain language summaries.	**Understandable Information** • Collaborate with patient communities to publish plain language summaries of HTA findings, limitations, and implications. • Translate HTA findings into practical implications for real-world decision-making.
Diverse Health Impacts • Fund capacity-building for patient organizations to identify implications of HTA analyses.	**Diverse Health Impacts** • Engage impacted populations in dialogue about the implications of HTA findings, especially how health technology may impact different patient groups.
Inclusive Decision-Making • Fund research to study holistic and inclusive decision-making. • Invest in training for researchers, patients, and caregivers to engage in holistic and inclusive decision-making processes.	**Inclusive Decision-Making** • Evaluate approaches to integrate deliberative processes such as MCDA and Delphi methods into HTA. • Develop and test methods for holistic and inclusive decision-making that includes patients and caregivers.

REFERENCE

Ridley M., Schultz E., Patel U., Chapman, R. (August 2024). "Fulfilling the Promise of Equity in Value-Based Care: A Focus on Health Technology Assessment Communications and Use." Center for Innovation & Value Research, Alexandria, VA. https://valueresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/HEI-Comms-and-Use-Report_FINAL.pdf

CONCLUSIONS

A systematic, multi-domain approach to incorporating equity considerations into HTA is needed to ensure equitable and patient-centered decision-making.

Changes in HTA communication and use processes are required by all stakeholders to ensure alignment with the goals of patients, their families, and other healthcare decision-makers.

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