

Advancing towards international HTA collaboration

A review of international network activities to support HTA efforts in ex-Europe low- and middle-income countries

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Background

Recently, there has been a growing trend towards international collaboration in health technology assessment (HTA). As countries face similar HTA challenges, there is a need for knowledge and information sharing, while avoiding research duplication. International HTA cooperation is especially important in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where, besides resource constraints, translating HTA knowledge into action remains a key challenge. This “know-do” gap can be filled by sharing the expertise, trainings and opportunities to gain practical experience. This research aims to analyze the existing international HTA networks in terms of examples of cooperation involving LMICs.

Methods

The International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment (INAHTA) and Health Technology Assessment International (HTAi) were identified as networks to focus on as they are the two biggest HTA networks operating globally.

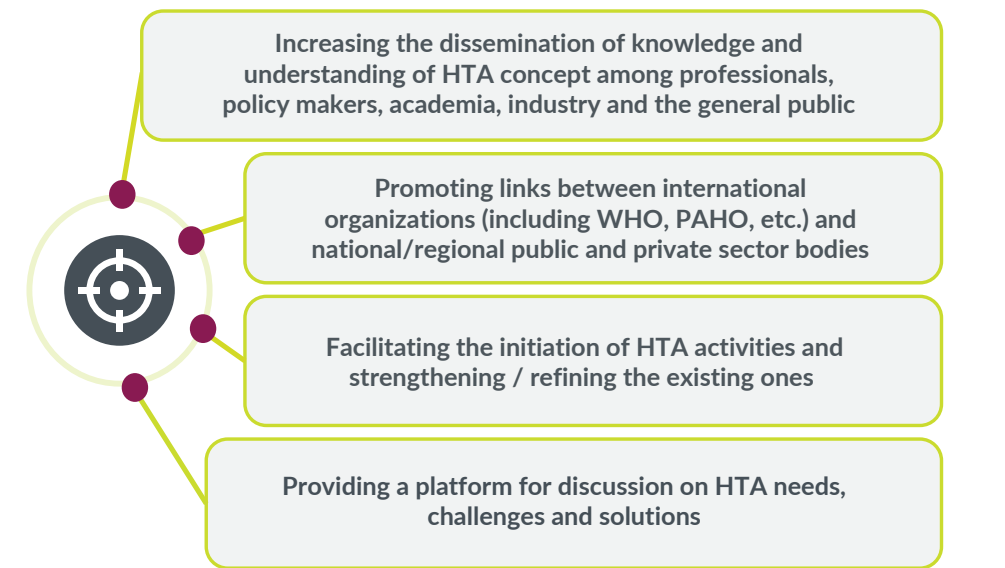
A literature search was conducted using the PubMed database and grey literature sources and select keywords related to INAHTA, HTAi, and LMICs. Articles discussing INAHTA and HTAi activities were retrieved and reviewed to identify any collaboration involving ex-Europe LMICs.

REFERENCES
[1] INAHTA website: www.inahta.org; [2] HTAi website: www.htai.org; [3] WHO website: www.who.int; [3] Schuller T, Int J Technol Assess Health Care. 2017 Jan;33(4):409-410; [4] O'Rourke, Int J Technol Assess Health Care. 2020;36(1):1-4.; [5] Berndt N, 2020, Feb., 10., DOI: 13140/RG.2.2.23732.19847; [6] Werkö, S, Int J Technol Assess Health Care. 37(1), E8; [7] Babigumira J, J Pharm Health Serv Res. 2016; 7 (1): 37-42

Results

Both INAHTA and HTAi include LMICs members and are engaged in collaborative HTA efforts in ex-Europe LMICs. The main areas of work are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Main areas of work of global HTA networks related to LMICs



On the one hand, INAHTA members have committed to organize annual Congress, where agency representatives share their experiences to allow members from LMICs gain insights and discuss approaches to HTA implementation. On the other hand, HTAi members have created a special entity called the “HTAi Interest Group on Developing Countries”, which aim is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. HTAi interest group on developing countries



HTAi Interest Group on Developing Countries

AIM: Promote the concept of HTA and facilitate the initiation of HTA activities in developing countries. The group consists of members from 27 LMICs who participate in working groups, committee meetings, trainings, research and develop joint publications throughout the year

A summary of the identified network activities related to LMICs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of activities involving LMICs between INAHTA and HTAi networks

		
HTA knowledge/ experience sharing tools	• INAHTA litserv (tool facilitating HTA knowledge exchange between members) • Webinars • International HTA database and glossary	• Repository of HTA resources • Regular bulletins • Regional activities and webinars
External collaboration	• WHO, HTAsiaLink, REDEtsa, PAHO	• WHO, HTAsiaLink
Annual work/ meetings	• Annual INAHTA Congress • Working groups and trainings throughout the year	• Annual Business Meetings • Steering Committee (every 6-8 weeks) • Working groups and trainings • Joint publications
HTA policy education	• Convincing local policy makers of the importance of HTA by participating at different events (e.g., regional health conferences)	
Identification of knowledge gaps	• Surveys to understand the knowlegde gaps and challenges faced by network members to ensure the services/initiatives offered are aligned with their needs	
Other	• Mentoring program to build the capacity of HTA staff in the required skills • Assisting in guidelines development	• Building social media presence related to HTA topic

HTAsiaLink: Asia Pacific Network of HTA agencies, HTAi: Health Technology Assessment International, INAHTA: International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment, PAHO: Pan American Health Organization, REDEtsa: Red de Evaluación de Tecnologías Sanitarias de las Américas , WHO: World Health Organisation.

Conclusions

The international exchange of HTA expertise is growing and HTA networks, such as INAHTA and HTAi, are increasingly impactful in building local expertise and supporting the advancement of HTA. As HTA efforts increase in LMICs, manufacturers should expand their pricing and access resources to account for the new geographic locations where HTA policies are drafted, ensuring that the tailoring of global and regional launch strategies meet the local needs and requirements, considering the development of local patient access programs, and engaging in conversations to cooperate with local governments.

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Increasing
prioritization
of activities