

# VALUE & OUTCOMES SPOTLIGHT

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Spring is in the air and it's time for us to look forward to ISPOR's 20th Annual International Meeting. That's right, twenty! Our Society is convening its main conference for the 20th time – it's quite a milestone. Fittingly, we're returning to Philadelphia this year, which hosted the original ISPOR meeting back in 1996, the 2nd the following year, and the 11th in 2006.

It's interesting to consider the growth in the ISPOR Annual International Meeting over the course of these Philadelphia-hosted events. The first and second meetings had 382 and 559 attendees, respectively, and just a couple dozen presentations, many of which were invited talks. The 11th meeting had 1,404 attendees who could pick and choose from hundreds of competitively selected presentations, and this year we anticipate about 3,500 attendees and more than 1,750 presentations.

This issue of *Value & Outcome Spotlight* features two articles based on contributions to last year's International meeting. The first is a provocative thought piece on the value of observational data in health care decisions, by Allan Korn. Dr. Korn questions the RCT-dominated paradigm of clinical research that has prevailed for the past 50 years or so. Scientific advances in our understanding of the genetic basis for disease etiology and the associated development of targeted therapies call into question the conventional RCT that enrolls scores of patients defined by disease pathology alone. He argues that observational studies must inevitably replace RCTs as the primary vehicle for clinical research and continual discovery.

The second article, by Tony Culyer, provides a rationale for the use of economic evidence to guide treatment adoption in the health care sector. Dr. Culyer sets forth his ideal health care delivery system, in which economic analysis is used to select treatments so as to maximize total health benefit subject to a budget constraint. This is a textbook application of incremental cost-effectiveness analysis but, interestingly, he uses the construct to highlight the deficiencies of the current comparative effectiveness / relative effectiveness research movement, which tends to ignore cost considerations in treatment rankings. Clinicians and policy makers tend to forget that "effective" does not equate to "cost-effective." When this is forgotten inefficiencies and inequities in health care delivery occur.

This issue also contains some interesting health policy articles and various news and notes of interest to the ISPOR membership. Finally, we feature program highlights from the upcoming International Meeting, the theme of which is *Integrating Big Data, Patient Data, and Cost-Effectiveness into Clinical Practice: Promise and Prospects*.

See you in Philadelphia!

David Thompson, PhD  
Editor-in-Chief, *Value & Outcomes Spotlight*

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