



## Health Technology Assessment (HTA) to inform decisions on cost-effectiveness in Ghana – A case for selection and reimbursement of priority medicines for hypertension

Priority setting is the process of ensuring that limited health budgets are allocated to the uses that have the greatest value to society and/or the ‘health system’. [1] Optimized resource allocation for the best outcomes hinges on informed choices that consider the trade-offs between the various options. Health Technology Assessment (HTA) or Economic Evaluation (EE) is a decision support tool for priority setting.

### What is Health Technology Assessment?

Health technology assessment (HTA) is the systematic evaluation of properties, effects and or impacts of health technologies and interventions. [2] More broadly, HTA is also described as a multidisciplinary field of policy analysis, which studies the medical, social, ethical, and economic implications of development, diffusion, and use of health technologies. [3]

Though there are other definitions for HTA, the cardinal features of this

analytical approach include: its role as a decision support tool, its multidisciplinary nature, its strong reliance on evidence and its transparent scientific methods with the best possible rigour.

HTA is thus applicable to any intervention(s) that may be used to promote health, to prevent, diagnose or treat disease, and for rehabilitation or long-term care. Such interventions could include the use of pharmaceuticals, devices, procedures and organizational systems used in health care.

### What is the justification for using HTA for priority setting in the health system in Ghana?

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is piloting the use of HTA to inform decisions on prioritisation in cost-containment and sustainability strategies of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA). This is being applied to the selection of medicines and development of Standard Treatment Guidelines for hypertension, a major chronic condition, which has been identified as a cost-driver under the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). [4]

The application of HTA to prioritization builds on existing developments in the health system, which include the following:

1. The revised National Medicines Policy, 3rd edition, 2016 recognised the role of HTA as a tool for priority setting in Ghana with the policy objective of strengthening the science and practice of HTA in support of evidence-based reimbursement decisions for the government and the NHIS. [5]

2. Ghana supported the HTA resolution, World Health Assembly Resolution WHA 67;23 agenda item 15.7, at the 67th World Health Assembly 2014, requiring all countries to work towards Universal Health Coverage using HTA as a tool for priority setting. [6]
3. The NHIA in 2014 conducted a stakeholder meeting on the sustainability of the NHIS and one of the items in the emergent communiqué was that the Ministry of Health should ‘midwife’ HTA as a priority setting tool to support sustainability of the NHIS as stated in item 3 of the communiqué [7]
4. Other countries have carried out some HTA work with beneficial outcomes and allows for knowledge brokerage, as is the case of Thailand and United Kingdom [8] [9]

## What are the benefits of HTA for Ghana?

The impact of HTA on the health system hinges on optimized utilization of resources as decisions are informed by the best evidence available. Thus HTA can:

1. provide evidence for prioritisation within the NHIS as well as set priorities for the services provided under the scheme;
2. provide data from economic analysis to inform decisions on cost, cost containment strategies as well as price negotiation interventions; and
3. guide the listing and delisting of pharmaceuticals and services in-line with the Essential Medicines Lists (EMLs) and strengthen the review of Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) as provided by the Ministry of Health.

For further enquiries contact

Ghana National Drugs Programme (GNDP), Ministry of Health,  
 P. O. Box MB 582, Accra.  
 Tel: +233 (0)302 661 670/1      Email: [gndp@ghndp.org](mailto:gndp@ghndp.org)  
 Website: [www.ghndp.org](http://www.ghndp.org)

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