

SUMMARY

This report provides the view of the Advisory Council on Health Research (Raad voor Gezondheidsonderzoek, RGO) on Health Technology Assessment (HTA) in the Netherlands and the research infrastructure required, especially with respect to the link between HTA and health policy, and the collaboration between the various relevant organisations and professional groups.

In the Council's view, bringing together researchers and relevant stakeholders around certain subsets of similar research questions will contribute to the relevance of the research and its use in health care. Therefore, commissioning HTA (i.e. assessing research proposals, scientific rigor and guidance of the research process) should start from the type of decisions to be taken and from the different stakeholders (organisations, groups, professionals) involved in decision making. Three different types of research questions are relevant: research questions concerning professional (medical) performance, questions concerning the organisation of health care, and questions on health care insurance policy, equity and access to health care. Accordingly, the Council recommends to establish three different (sub)programmes for HTA. In each programme the societal relevance of the research questions, quality of the research methodology, as well as the recommendations for health policy should be accounted for in a transparent and explicit way. In broad outlines, these programmes could be as follows.

The HTA programme "Professional performance" focusses on questions concerning quality and efficiency (cost-effectiveness) of medical and nursing care, and the organisation of the care. Its goal is to support the formulation of medical/nursing guidelines. Research topics can be gathered from professionals, organisations involved in making clinical guidelines, as well as from the Health Care Insurance Board and the Health Council. The RGO will formulate priorities for research. The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development should commission the research in this programme in close collaboration with the organisations involved in making clinical guidelines.

The HTA-Programme "Health Care Organisation" aims to provide a knowledge base for health care managers and politicians and covers efficiency research of organisational and managerial issues. Stakeholders are, amongst others, health care managers, patient groups and the Health Care Insurance Board. Research in this programme is commissioned by the Netherlands Orga-

nisation for Health Research and Development which will actively pay attention to the diffusion and implementation of the research findings.

The third programme aims at efficiency research in matters related to decisions on the basic insurance package and related matters of equity and access to health care. Research questions concern cost/cost-effectiveness of (the components of) the basic insurance package, criteria for decisions on cost control, equity, measures to control under- and over consumption of health care, etc. Again, the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development should commission the research in this programme. Considering the central role of the Health Care Insurance Board in decisions on the basic insurance package, the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development should seek close collaboration with the Board. The RGO recommends a special fund for ad hoc research, e.g. research on cost-effectiveness of diagnosis-treatment modules, commissioned by the Health Care Insurance Board.

Finally, the Council is of the opinion that drugs should no longer be excluded from the HTA-programme. In his advice on the research and development structure in pharmaceutical care (to be published spring 2005) the Council will go into the priorities of HTA in this field.