

Health Technology Assessment Philippines

Annual Report 2020

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MESSAGE FROM THE HTAC CHAIR

The Health Technology Assessment Council went through a baptism of fire in 2020.

Born in October 2019, the members prepared themselves through capacity building activities, in collaboration with Health Information and Technology Assessment Program (HITAP) and UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). A strategic plan was likewise developed to guide the Council in their work to help “provide safe, effective, fair, affordable and responsive health care for all Filipinos.”

In 2020, the Council continued its deliberations and consultations to lay down the governance structure and to define the work and processes of HTA, with clarity and transparency. Together, we pored earnestly over the proposed Administrative Order, and developed and launched the HTA Process and Methods Guides. The program for public consultations to obtain inputs from stakeholders was likewise laid out, moderators and speakers identified. Immediate work on new and pending assessments (e.g., PCV vaccine, drugs from the erstwhile Formulary Executive Council) began.

And, then, COVID-19 struck!

Before we knew it, the Council had to do rapid assessments of donated diagnostic technology, applications for diagnostic kits, COVID-19 treatments and procedures. The strategic plan had to be set aside, the public and Council consultations converted to virtual meetings and the dividing line of work between subcommittees erased. The challenge was to provide timely, thoughtful, and helpful response to policy questions borne from the need to efficiently manage the pandemic.

There were many realizations in 2020 which will guide us for a long time.

- 1) Our commitment to the Filipino people defines us.
- 2) Our collective thoughts strengthen us.
- 3) We know we are smart, but we can be wrong, too.
- 4) We must weigh evidence objectively and change our minds gracefully.
- 5) There exist no “them,” nor “us.” We are in this together.

Thank you for the privilege of working with all of you!

Marita V. Tolentino-Reyes, MD
Chair, HTAC Core Committee

MESSAGE FROM THE DOST-PCHRD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Congratulations to the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) for a fruitful 2020! In less than two years since its conception, the Council has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and dedication to its duty through its contributions to the country's COVID-19 response.

With the challenge to rapidly provide quality, effective, and affordable healthcare solutions amidst the pandemic, the HTAC provided valuable assistance to the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) in ensuring that we prioritize evidence-based technologies and strategies for the benefit of every Filipino. In only a year, the Council has reviewed and recommended several diagnostic kits, health innovations, and alternative treatments for COVID-19 as part of the services to be covered under our Universal Health Care programs.

As the lead agency for health research activities in the country, we, at the Department of Science and Technology- Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD), are glad to have the HTAC as an ally in forwarding research-based and evidence-informed health solutions, especially as our communities and the healthcare sector are burdened by the global health crisis.

In the coming year, we look forward to fostering dynamic partnerships and collaborations through the Council's transition as a DOST-attached agency, the Health Technology Assessment Research Network. By complementing our expertise and resources, we are hopeful that we will be able to bring more health solutions that support our UHC goals, to make Filipino lives better. May we continue leveraging research and evidence to bridge pressing healthcare gaps.

Maraming salamat po.

Mabuhay ang HTAC!

Jaime C. Montoya, MD, MSc, PhD, CESO II
Director, DOST-PCHRD

WHO WE ARE

INTRODUCING HTA PHILIPPINES

Republic Act 11223 or the Universal Health Care Act formalized health technology assessment (HTA) as a priority setting mechanism for program and policy development, regulation, and entitlement arbitration in the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).

The Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) under this Act functions as an independent advisory body, guiding coverage and public funding for health interventions. It is composed of nine (9) Core Committee members and seven (7) Subcommittees. A screening committee composed of senior officials from the DOH, DOST and PhilHealth selected members of the HTAC through a series of nominations.

THE HTAC CORE COMMITTEE



MARITA V. TOLENTINO-REYES, MD
Health Ethicist
Chair, HTAC Core Committee



ANNABELLE R. BORROMEO, PHD, MHA, RN, CNS
Citizen's Representative
Vice Chair, Core Committee



MA. CARMEN CORNELIA-TOLABING, DRPH
Public Health Epidemiologist
Core Committee



CECILIA C. MARAMBA-LAZARTE, MD, MSCID, MSCCT
Clinical Trial/Research Methods Expert
Core Committee



MARIA CARINNES P. ALEJANDRIA, PHD
Sociologist/Anthropologist
Core Committee



MARTHA BUGNOSEN-CAYAD-AN, MD, MPH, CESO III
Public Health Expert
Core Committee



BU C. CASTRO, M.D. LL.B. FPSP
Medico-Legal Expert
Core Committee



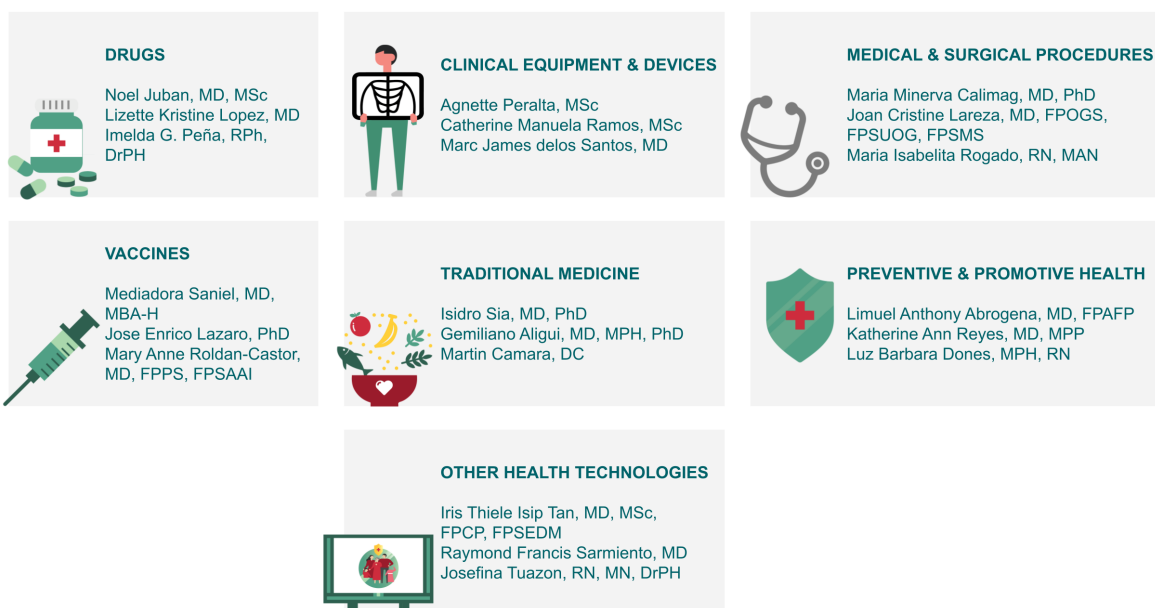
JACINTO BLAS V. MANTARING III, MD, MSC
Clinical Epidemiologist/Evidence-based Medicine Expert
Core Committee



ALELI D. KRAFT, PHD
Health Economist
Core Committee

The HTAC Core Committee comprises voting members from different fields of expertise. They formulate final recommendations for policy- and decision-makers based on appraisals from different subcommittees.

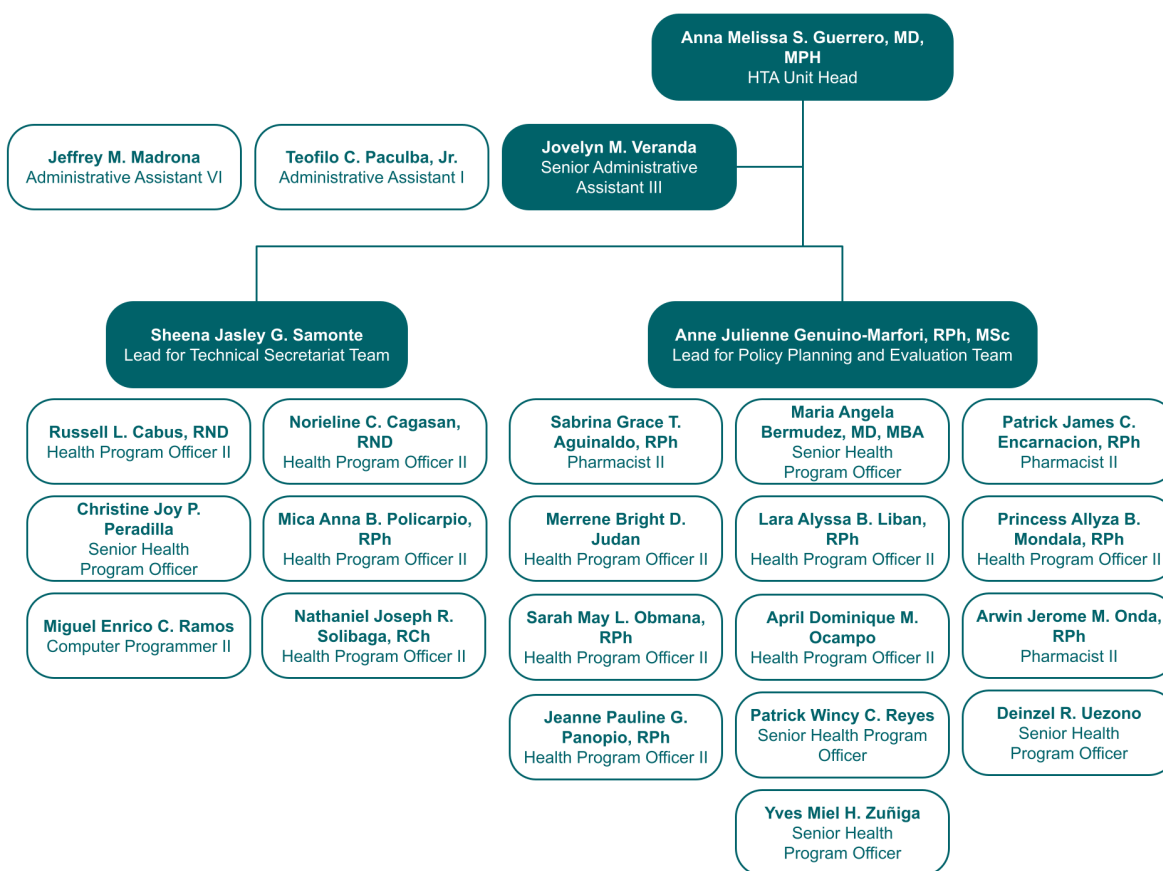
THE HTAC SUBCOMMITTEES



The HTAC Subcommittees perform initial review of HTA reports and submissions from all relevant stakeholders.

They are constituted according to the broad types of health technologies.

THE HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT UNIT (HTAU)



HTAU is composed of the Administrative, Technical Secretariat, and Policy, Planning and Evaluation teams. The Health Technology Assessment Unit supports the HTAC with governance, management, and operations.

HTA Philippines continues to work towards helping provide safe, effective, efficient, fair, affordable, and responsive health care for all Filipinos.

OUR VISION

An institution that champions evidence-informed policies and decisions that will enable Filipinos to access quality, effective, and affordable health technologies

OUR MISSION

To provide technical guidance on the optimal use of health technologies in the pursuit of Universal Health Care in the Philippines

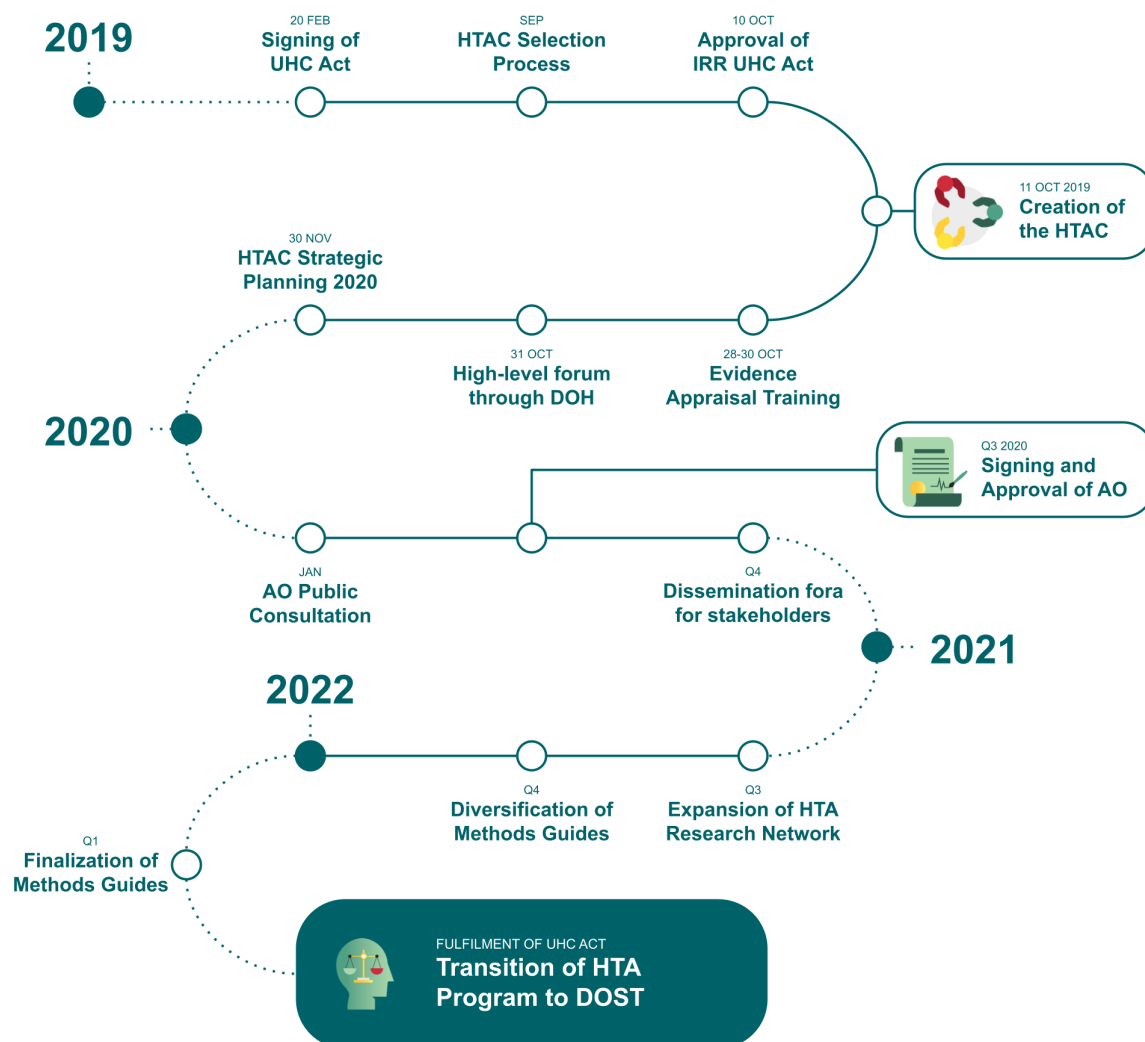
OUR GOALS

With the goal to institutionalize and implement HTA as a fair and transparent priority setting mechanism in the achievement of Universal Healthcare, the Unit plans to:

- Uphold good governance in the implementation of HTA by ensuring adherence to set standards
- Produce timely and evidence-based health technology assessment reports that are responsive to the needs of healthcare policymakers and providers
- Create a conducive ecosystem for HTA collaboration locally and internationally
- Ensure an inclusive and effective engagement with all stakeholders

YEAR IN REVIEW

HTA IN THE PHILIPPINES: A ROADMAP



POLICY & INFRASTRUCTURE

SUMMARY OF HTA ISSUANCES

- RA No. 11223

Republic Act 11223 or the “Universal Health Care Act” sets HTA as a prerequisite for procurement and financing through the DOH and PhilHealth. The Act aligns HTA with DOH and PhilHealth processes, and establishes that all health technologies granted public funding and coverage undergo the HTA process.

- AO No. 2020-0041

The Department of Health released Administrative Order No. 2020-0041 or the Implementing Guidelines on HTA 08 September 2020 as part of its commitment towards achieving UHC. The Order sets the HTA framework through its annexes, the Process and Methods Guides, and delineates roles, responsibilities, and requirements for Offices and stakeholders involved in HTA.

The Department sought to consult stakeholders (i.e., internal offices, government agencies, patient organizations, healthcare providers, the academe and industry) in finalizing the AO and its annexes, the Process and Methods Guides. Due to restrictions brought about at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, consultations proceeded virtually in March.

The Process Guide details general steps the HTA Unit employs in conducting HTA. It describes the structure and transparency in processes the HTAC follows, and the active role stakeholders play in HTA. On the other hand, the Methods Guide provides researchers technical guidance in conducting HTA. It serves as the basis for producing reports anchored on clinical, economic, ethical, legal, social, and health systems domains.

HTA Philippines hosted a webinar series titled ‘[HTA 101: Moving Together Towards UHC](#)’ in December to present the documents to partners. We continue to seek areas for development, and shall update the Policies and Guides accordingly.

- Inclusions in the Philippine National Formulary

HTA Philippines in fulfilment of its mandate continues to update the Process and Methods Guides. As the HTAC transitioned from the old Philippine National Formulary (PNF) System, it has worked to support the DOH in its COVID-19 response and program management in the past year. New HTA tracks have since emerged - minor inclusion and urgent processes. As of writing, the HTA Process has evolved into the following categories:

- Major Applications: general, expedited, urgent (from DOH programs, non-Public Health Emergencies)
- Minor Applications: minor inclusion

While HTA Philippines has yet to release policies on urgent and minor inclusion tracks, the Office has so far accommodated numerous requests from DOH programs and hospitals.

The HTA Office on 17 November 2020 likewise issued a memorandum on minor applications for drugs currently listed in PNF, including additional strength, immediate packaging, and net content.

LAUNCHING THE NEW HTA PHILIPPINES WEBSITE

HTA Philippines launched its official website on 01 September 2020 as part of continuous efforts to engage with key stakeholders. This project sought to introduce the Office, its mission, vision, and goals, and communicate initiatives, recommendations, and COVID-19 rapid reviews. As the primary platform for HTA-related events, its key objectives also included increasing engagement with stakeholders.

Amassing a visitor count of around 17000 users, hta.doh.gov.ph now features regular updates and guidance on HTAC recommendations and other HTA-related activities. Key among these include information, education, and communication (IEC) materials for partners and the general public, generating 7,309 clicks in the past year.

ASSESSMENTS & REVIEWS

HTA Philippines recognizes the value of evidence-based decision-making in order to achieve UHC and address emerging public health emergencies. Part of its efforts include publishing rapid reviews on COVID-19 health technologies such as medicines, diagnostic test kits, and other interventions.

For the first two years, HTA Philippines has accepted nominations for existing health technologies covered through DOH and PhilHealth funds, but require assessment for possible expansion or disinvestment in order to increase fiscal space. The Office shall open topic nominations for new health technologies (except new COVID-19 technologies) in September 2021.

REASSESSMENT OF PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE 13 (PCV-13)

The HTA Unit presented initial results of the 10- and 13- valent Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccines (PCV) reassessment through a virtual public consultation 11 June 2020. Colleagues from the National Immunization Program (NIP), the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), the Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP), the Philippine Alliance of Patient Organizations (PAPO), and PCV manufacturers provided input critical to refining the HTAC recommendation.

COVID-19 RAPID REVIEWS

In fulfillment of its mandate to provide guidance for financing health technologies, the HTAC also released recommendations for COVID-19 interventions based on best available evidence. Assessments followed the overall HTA framework, which consists of the following criteria: (1) responsiveness to magnitude and severity; (2) clinical efficacy and safety; (3) affordability and viability; (4) household financial impact; (5) social impact; and (6) responsiveness to equity.

As of December 2020, the Secretary of Health has approved the final HTAC recommendations on the following COVID-19 health technologies:

- AMTI uAI-Discover-PNA (Pneumonia) to facilitate diagnosis, assessment, and staging of COVID-19
- Cycloferon for the treatment of COVID-19
- Extracorporeal Machine Oxygenation (ECMO) for patients with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) in COVID-19
- Favipiravir for the treatment of COVID-19
- High-Flow Nasal Cannula (HFNC) Oxygen Therapy for the treatment of Acute Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure for COVID-19
- Huawei Cloud Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Diagnosis for COVID-19
- IgG and IgM Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) Kits for Mild and Asymptomatic At-Risk COVID-19 Cases
- Rapid Antibody-based Test Kits (RATs) for Various Use Cases for COVID-19
- SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR Test Kits for the Diagnosis of COVID-19 Cases
- Pooled Testing for the Diagnosis, Screening, and Surveillance of COVID-19
- Rapid Antigen Test Kits for the diagnosis of COVID-19

In support of HTAC's recommendations on COVID-19 technologies, DOH stated that all test kits must meet the minimum criteria through Department Memorandum No. 2020-0439 or the Omnibus Interim Guidelines on Prevention, Detection, Isolation Treatment, and Reintegration Strategies for COVID-19.

While HTA Philippines has yet to formalize its research network of private and public entities, the HTAC continues to work closely with independent experts, such as the Philippine COVID-19 Living CPG Group – Institute of Clinical Epidemiology, National Institutes of Health UP Manila, UST Salinwika, UST Simbahayan, patient groups and community leaders, to ensure clear, inclusive and responsive recommendations and strengthen national government health emergency response.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENTS

HITAP

The Health Information and Technology Assessment Program (HITAP) and HTA Philippines have been working closely since 2019. Key among our partnership initiatives include creating and finalizing the Philippine HTA Methods Guide.

HTA Philippines in the three-part webinar series “Using Evidence to Address Healthcare Challenges in Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMICs)” held September to October 2020 presented the case study on the cost-effectiveness analysis of pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCV). This marked the first of several completed assessments in the past year.

Part of our capacity-building activities also included strengthening our knowledge of systematic reviews and conducting economic evaluations through the digital short course Sifting for Gold held July 2020.

UK NICE

NICE's response to COVID-19; webinar for international organizations

The UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE International) webinar held on 28 May 2020 sought to share with international organizations insights from developing rapid guidelines and evidence summaries in response to COVID-19.

The following colleagues from the NICE International team and other departments made presentations during the event:

- Pilar Pinilla-Dominguez, Principal Scientific Adviser
- Deborah Lee, Senior Project Manager
- Carla Deakin, Programme Director Commercial and Managed Access
- Jonathan Underhill, Associate Director, Medicines Evidence
- Andy Hutchinson, Technical Adviser, Medicines Education and Evidence
- Eric Power, Programme Director, Medicines and Technology Programme
- Nichole Taske, Associate Director, Methods and Economics, Centre for Guidelines

Better Health Programme Learning Series

The learning series had included the NICE International technical visit to the Philippines; however, following travel restrictions in March due to COVID-19, the series proceeded virtually. Members and staff from HTA Philippines attended the sessions from 23 September to 11 November 2020. Topics covered for each session included:

1. COVID-19 Response and Guiding Principles of Evidence-based Decision-making
2. NICE methodology for technology appraisals
3. NICE Committee meeting
4. Peer-to-peer training workshop on Appraisals and decision making
5. The process for technology appraisals & public consultations; patient and public engagement

HTA Philippines extends gratitude to our esteemed colleagues at NICE International:

- Jeanette Kusel, Director, NICE Scientific Advice and NICE International
- Pilar Pinilla-Dominguez, Principal Scientific Adviser
- Deborah Lee, Senior Project Manager
- Eli Gajraj, Principal Technical Adviser, NICE Scientific Advice
- Laura Worthington, Assistant Project Manager, NICE Scientific Advice
- Amanda Adler, Consultant Physician and Chair of NICE Technology Appraisals committee B
- Jenna Dilkes, Associate Director of Planning and Operations, Technology Appraisals
- Chris Connell, Associate Director, NICE Field Team (South)

Other key endeavors with NICE International and the British Embassy Manila included a partnership highlight, resource speaking engagements with HTA Philippines thought leaders, and an interview with Chair Marita Tolentino-Reyes on next steps with NICE International. The discussion likewise underscored lessons learned through peer-to-peer learning formats and explored the concept of mature HTA structures guiding nascent systems.

World Evidence-Based Healthcare Day 2020

UK NICE has worked with seven leading global organizations in launching their global initiative to promote evidence-based healthcare policy, practice and decision making. Our virtual event, themed “Strengthening COVID-19 Response in the Philippines through Health Technology Assessment,” marks our contribution to emphasizing the urgent need to collect, evaluate, and act on the recent stream of information amid the global crisis as the national health system strives to strengthen health emergency response efforts and achieve universal healthcare. For more information, visit bit.ly/webhc-2020.

ASEAN Follow Up Assessment

Considering their common epidemiologic, cultural and health system conditions, ASEAN member states (AMS) share similar demands and challenges in introducing new health technologies. Few AMS hold mature programs capable of producing HTAs, while others have only started capacity building. The ASEAN Follow Up Study in line with the 2016–2020 ASEAN Health Cluster 3 (AHC3) Work Plan sought to determine gaps, needs, and opportunities in HTA institutionalization across AMS.

The FUA revealed that while only five (5) of the eight (8) respondent countries have established a formal HTA institution, much progress has since arisen. Further, the study emphasized the importance of sustained collaboration across AMS and identified potential opportunities in mentoring and knowledge sharing.

On 28 September 2020, the Senior Officials’ Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) approved the ASEAN follow-up assessment.

2021 GOALS

For 2021, HTA Philippines carries on its commitment to support the national crisis response. Aside from regular assessments, the Office expands its efforts in refining the Philippine HTA Methodological Guide and establishing the HTA research network.

PHILIPPINE REFERENCE COSTS FOR ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS

HTA Philippines shall further refine the Methods Guide for health economic evaluation through reference cost-setting and the establishment of a national costing library. Similar to countries with developed costing manuals (e.g., Thailand Standard cost lists for health economic evaluation, CADTH Guidance Document for the Costing of Care Resources in the Canadian Setting and UK-NHS Costing Manual), the Office shall develop a standard costing methodology and a library of reference values for health costs relevant to the Philippine context through external expert groups.

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDES FOR UHC PRIORITY HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES

Current limitations for health technologies subsumed within the First Edition of the Methods Guide highlights the need for tailored methodological guides. Different sets of outcome variables prove necessary in assessing clinical efficacy of traditional medicines and public health impacts of promotive health interventions. Health technologies involving electronic and telecommunication platforms, artificial intelligence and machine learning systems also require a different set of methodological standards for evaluation. To develop guides for these, next steps include literature review, expert consultation, assessment of usability, and a peer-review. Once developed, dissemination can proceed through issuances and workshops/webinars.

HTA RESEARCH NETWORK

As HTA Philippines prepares for its transition as an independent entity attached to the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), coordination to explore partnerships with institutions through the HTA Research network has commenced. Such partnership shall cover research topic commissioning, publication of an HTA journal and other dissemination activities, capacity building, academic programs, and the establishment of review centers. A collaborative approach will streamline the work on evidence reviews, and accelerate the delivery of much-needed guidance for decision-makers and health policy makers.

INCREASED PATIENT INVOLVEMENT WITH HTAC

Recognizing the importance of increasing patient participation in the health technology process, HTAC continues to explore ways to integrate patient perspectives in reports and conduct formal evaluations on how patient involvement impacts HTA.

ANNEXES

ANNEX A. HTA GOVERNANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Title	Highlights	Link
Republic Act No. 11223 An Act Instituting Universal Health Care for All Filipinos, Prescribing Reforms in the Health Care System, and Appropriating Funds Therefor	Formalizes HTA as a priority setting mechanism for all health technologies procured through DOH and PhilHealth funds	https://www.congress.gov.ph/legisdocs/ra_17/RA11223.pdf
Republic Act No. 11223 Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Universal Health Care Act	Details key players in the conduct of HTA, and the specific roles of HTAC in the pursuit of UHC	https://doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/basic-page/UHC-IRR-signed.pdf
Administrative Order DOH AO No. 2020-0041 New Implementing Guidelines on Health Technology Assessment to Guide Funding Allocation and Coverage Decisions in support of Universal Health Care	Sets the HTA governance and operational framework through its annexes, the Process and Methods Guides	AO 2020-0041: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PVmKo7DDz4j0LIr0tOi8hniSg7sT4oN_/view Philippine HTA Process Guide: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yJl8_D5VgKbp8mGkKJUNH39vzbBiVuZf/view Philippine HTA Methods Guide: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yJl8_D5VgKbp8mGkKJUNH39vzbBiVuZf/view
Memorandum DOH Acceptance of Minor Inclusions in the Philippine National Formulary (PNF) for Health Technology Assessment (HTA) following the PNF System for Drugs	Refines the HTA track for inclusions in the PNF	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/2020/11/18/memo-on-the-acceptance-of-minor-inclusions-in-the-philippine-national-for-mulary-pnf-for-health-technology-assessment-hta-following-the-pnf-system-for-drugs/

ANNEX B. SUMMARY OF COVID-19 ASSESSMENTS

Health Technology	Recommendation	Link
AMTI uAI-Discover-PNA (Pneumonia) to facilitate diagnosis, assessment, and staging of COVID-19	Acceptance of donation not recommended	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/anti-uai-discover-pna/
Cycloferon for the treatment of COVID-19	Acceptance of donation not recommended	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/cycloferon/
Extracorporeal Machine Oxygenation (ECMO) for patients with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) in COVID-19	Insufficient evidence to support positive recommendation	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/extracorporeal-membrane-oxygenation-ecmo-for-covid-19-patients-with-ards/
Favipiravir for the treatment of COVID-19	Recommended for compassionate use	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/favipiravir/
High-Flow Nasal Cannula (HFNC) Oxygen Therapy for the treatment of Acute Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure for COVID-19	Continued funding recommended	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/2021/01/24/high-flow-nasal-cannula-oxygen-therapy-for-the-treatment-of-acute-hypoxemic-respiratory-failure-for-covid-19/
Huawei Cloud Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Diagnosis for COVID-19	DOH or local hospital participation in proof of concept study not recommended	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/huawei-cloud-ai-assisted-diagnosis/
IgG and IgM Rapid Diagnostic Test (RDT) Kits for Mild and Asymptomatic At-Risk COVID-19 Cases	Not recommend as a sole screening and diagnostic tool for COVID-19, pending further scientific evidence on its accuracy, but a parallel multi-site clinical trial is highly recommended	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/rapid-antibody-tests-ratsmarch-2020-assessment/
Rapid Antibody-based Test Kits (RATs) for Various Use Cases for COVID-19	Not recommended for standalone testing, seroprevalence surveys, return-to-work decisions, disease surveillance	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/rapid-antibody-tests-rats-may-2020-reassessment/
SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR Test Kits for the Diagnosis of COVID-19 Cases	Recommended for use provided test kit meets prescribed specifications	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/reverse-transcriptase-polymerase-chain-reaction-rt-pcr/

Pooled Testing for the Diagnosis, Screening, and Surveillance of COVID-19	Recommended for screening and surveillance in low-prevalence populations	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/2020/11/20/use-of-pooled-testing-for-the-diagnosis-screening-and-surveillance-of-covid-19/
Rapid Antigen Test Kits for the diagnosis of COVID-19	Recommended for targeted screening and diagnosis, and in conjunction with confirmatory RT-PCR testing	https://hta.doh.gov.ph/2020/10/15/use-of-rapid-antigen-test-kits-for-the-diagnosis-of-covid-19/