Summary Nordic-Baltic HTA Forum 2021

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The Nordic-Baltic HTA forum was an opportunity for international collaboration and discussion that took place as a digital event on December 8, 2021. The forum introduced different perspectives on health technology assessment and included a range of presentation from the EU, regional and national level in the participating countries. The morning session gave some broad perspectives with topics surrounding EU regulations and frameworks, existing cross-national collaborations, and overviews from each Nordic and Baltic country of challenges and opportunities in HTA. The afternoon session became more interactive with a panel discussion on real world data followed by a workshop centered around how the Nordic-Baltic countries could collaborate around common challenges and opportunities concerning HTA.

Highlights from EU-level

Anna-Eva Ampelas from the European commission introduced the joint work regarding HTA regulations that is being headed by the EU.

Some areas suggested for joint EU collaboration in the future include clinical assessments, scientific consultations, and Horizon scanning. New regulations for HTA in EU propose changes in the legislation for HTA:

- Joint work on scientific and clinical aspects of HTA
- Joint work in national HTA processes

The expected benefits of the new regulations include increased quality, improved transparency and engagement for patients and clearer, more coherent evidence requirements for companies to adhere to.

Additionally, Nicklas Hedberg, TLV, Sweden and chair of EUnetHTA gave an overview of some of the news from EUnetHTA and HAG (head of agencies). The EUnetHTA is a consortium of 13 agencies in 12 countries that is working on the joint clinical assessments of both drugs and medical devices while also providing joint scientific consultations together with stakeholders. The HAG group is a voluntary collaboration between selected European HTA Agencies supporting development of joint HTA work at the EU level and lending support to national systems. The HAG is a network of 19 European HTA-bodiesproviding advice policymakers and relevant EU and national institutions on HTA.

Regional level

There are some existing collaborations at the Nordic-Baltic level focused on information sharing, horizon scanning, and HTA. However, these need to be further developed as collaborations provide opportunities and value for the Nordic-Baltic countries. A challenge is that the Nordic market is quite small and therefore do not have the same pricing opportunities or the same economics of scale. A larger market can make it more attractive to offer new

models for payment, negotiate better prices and also ensure supply. There may, however, be quite different opinions between different stakeholders.The pharmaceutical industry sees, e.g., limited value in negotiating prices with a consortium instead of individual countries. The markets, healthcare priorities and willingness to pay differ and prices should therefore preferably be set differently for the various countries.

One initiative is the Nordic Pharmaceutical Forum which is a collaboration between Norway, Denmark and Iceland that works together with stakeholders for more robust insights in HTA. Another is FINOSE that deals with joint health economic assessment.

Some challenges that were highlighted:

- What can/will society pay for pharmaceuticals (especially with the introduction of precision medicine and biopharma)
- Digitalization of all processes
- Collecting data from multiple sources and sharing information internationally

Real World Data

A panel discussion on the opportunities and challenges obtaining and assessing Real World Data (RWD) was held. Such data play an increasing role for HTA-agencies and others aiming to improve care. The discussion focused on types of data needed, national priorities, legal aspects and opportunities for cross-national collaboration. The panelists agreed that there is a need for more easy access to this data. Even though the Nordic-Baltic countries are very fortunate to have the possibility to follow patients with large registers using unique identifers, there are still some important data lacking such as specialist drugs administered in the hospital setting. Data and evidence on medical devices are even more difficult to access and analyze in a systematic way. Furthermore, it is difficult to get timely access to data with many stakeholders involved at a national and regional level. Some promising intiatives are under way such as FinData, but more efforts are needed. A Nordic-Baltic collaboration in the field of RWD would be valuable, given that many new medicines target small populations where it is not enough with data from one country to draw conclusions on effectiveness and safety. There is also an opportunity to learn through comparing patterns of drug use in the different countries in relation to measures taken to improve quality and efficiency.

Workshop

The day concluded with a workshop where participants were asked “what would an ideal Nordic-Baltic HTA cooperation look like?”

Results

Seven groups presented their answers and while some were different a lot of the answers shared a common theme: having an open and transparent collaboration where results and data is shared and analyzed freely. Some key points raised were:

- Shared processes for HTA across the region with strong connection to RWD
- Work on streamlining the Nordic-Baltic HTA process. Important so that the process will increase speed and reduce resource needs
- Open discussion between HTA Agencies & Industry in regard to reliable timelines
- Different economical capacities!

- For very rare diseases an independent clinical assessor will be easier to find if collaborating
- Work together on agreements for the demand in a HTA process
- Collect RWD in the same way

As the above list indicates there are many potential areas for Nordic-Baltic collaboration and this workshop showed the growing need and desire to collaborate among different stakeholders.

The author of this summary encourages participants to continue to seek out collaborations in HTA and RWD fields and to do so proactively.