Financial integration across health and social care: evidence review

By Helen Weatherly, Anne Mason, Kath Wright (CRD) & Maria Goddard

Scotland has developed an Integrated Resource Framework (IRF) to shift the investment away from the acute sector and towards health improvement and prevention. IRFs are to be piloted at five sites in Scotland. To inform the evaluation of these pilots, the Scottish Government commissioned CHE to review the international literature on integrated resource mechanisms (IRMs).

IRMs vary enormously in both their scope and structure. Evidence for an impact on health outcomes is sparse, provides mixed messages and its validity is often questionable. Evidence that IRMs can deliver cost savings is weak.

Key challenges to evaluating the Scottish IRF pilots include the problem of attribution, determining adequate timescales to measure longer term impacts, and appropriately assessing effects, costs and unintended consequences across the different IRF models.

Improving the empirical basis for the NICE cost-effectiveness threshold

Mark Sculpher

Cost-effectiveness analysis used by NICE is essentially an assessment of whether the health expected to be gained from the use of a new medical technology exceeds the health likely to be forgone as other NHS activities are displaced to accommodate the additional costs of the new technology. The cost-effectiveness threshold represents an estimate of the health forgone as services are displaced. Currently the threshold used by NICE has little empirical basis. The aim of this new research project is to develop and to demonstrate methods for threshold estimation which make best use of routinely available NHS data, allowing scrutiny by a range of stakeholders, improving accountability and predictability. This research will focus on complementary methods which can make best use of those data that are already available, where there are already plans to make data available or where additional data could feasibly be made available at reasonable cost.

Terminology matters

Mike Drummond

That was the conclusion reached by an International Working Group for Health Technology Assessment Advancement which included Michael Drummond from CHE. The group considered terms commonly used by health care and policy experts across the world – in particular, ‘Evidence Based Medicine’, ‘Health Technology Assessment’ and ‘Comparative Effectiveness Research’ – and concluded that despite important differences they are often used interchangeably, causing miscommunication, confusion and poor decision-making. This is important from the perspective of those involved in producing key policies such as clinical guidelines and reimbursement decisions. The authors used three key questions to disentangle terminology: “Can it work?” (efficacy), “Does it work?” (effectiveness), and “Is it worth it?” (economic value) and they provide their preferred definitions for future use. For more details go to

Figure 1. Health production and the threshold

See ‘New projects’ on page three for further project details.

Health Economists’ Study Group (HESG) 2011 Winter Conference

Hosted by the Centre for Health Economics

CHE is pleased to announce registration for the 2011 HESG winter conference is now open. The conference will be held at the Best Western Monkbar Hotel in York from 5-7 January 2011.

There are two HESG meetings per year attracting 100-125 participants with approximately 36 papers presented and discussed over the 3 days of the conference. The format of the conference is that accepted papers are made available on-line pre-conference for discussion in hour-long sessions, which consist of a 20 minute presentation from an independent discussant and an opportunity for the authors to clarify any points before the discussion is open to the audience. The range of papers selected reflects the current balance of work, the largest categories typically being economic evaluation, health outcome measurement and the finance and organisation of health care.

Important deadline dates:
Submission of abstracts: 8 October 2010
Early registration: 12 November 2010
Submission of (selected) conference papers: 19 November 2010
For full details go to www

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Analysing patient data using hospital episode statistics

Workshop 2-3 November 2010

This intensive workshop introduces participants to Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data and how to handle and manipulate these very large data sets using STATA computer software. Participants will engage in problem-solving exercises, analysing the information in highly interactive sessions.

This workshop is only offered to people working in the public sector or academia and is suitable for analysts working in NHS hospitals, commissioning organisations and the Department of Health, and for health care researchers and PhD students.

For full details on the course objectives, prerequisites, fees and registration see the website: www

Staff news

Mark Sculpher has been elected President of the International Society of Pharmaco-economics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR). ISPOR is a non-profit, international, educational and scientific organization promoting the science of pharmaco-economics and health outcomes research. The Society has over 5000 members and is organized to act as a scientific leader relevant to research in pharmaco economics, health outcomes assessment, and related issues of public policy.

New projects

Karl Claxton with University of Bristol. Expected value of information and synthesis methods for research prioritisation and study design. Sponsored by the MRC.

Mark Sculpher, Nigel Rice and Karl Claxton with Steve Martin, Peter Smith and Nancy Devlin. Methods to estimate the NICE cost-effectiveness threshold. Sponsored by the MRC.

Conference, seminar and workshop presentations

Maria Goddard participated in the European Working Conference on Health Services Research in Europe held in The Hague, The Netherlands in April, contributing on the challenges of policy evaluation.

Andrew Street gave a presentation to the British Medical Association about NHS Productivity.

Michael Drummond gave a Keynote Presentation at the 5th International Conference of the Royal Jordanian Medical Service.

Mark Sculpher presented a paper entitled ‘Age Weighting and the QALY’ at a conference at University College London on NICE, Age Discrimination, and Life Saving Treatments.

Michael Drummond and Andrea Manca each gave a talk in an organised workshop entitled ‘Challenges in designing, conducting and analysing multinational economic clinical trials’ at the 15th Annual International Meeting of the International Society for Pharmaco economics and Outcomes Research in Atlanta, USA.

Forthcoming seminars

Anne Ludbrook, Katherine Payne and Stavros Petrou will be giving seminars at CHE. For further details see www

CHE Publications January – June 2010


Campbell JD, Spackman DE. The costs and consequences of Omalizumab in uncontrolled Asthma from a USA payer perspective. Allergy 2010;DOI: 10.1111/j.1398-9995.2010.02336.x.


