

Envisioning a new paradigm for health technology assessment

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Background

The newly developed and advanced technologies provide benefits, but they also increase national healthcare expenditure and cause uncertainty in safety and effectiveness. Health Technology Assessment (HTA) for the value of technologies becomes necessary in many countries. In order to make a decision about whether specific health technology can be accepted or not, it should be assessed based on scientific evidence with social, legal, and ethical aspects.

National Evidence-based Healthcare Collaborating Agency (NECA) was established in 2009 with the vision of ‘an agency that leads creation of healthcare evidence’ under the mission of ‘contributing to the efficient use of national healthcare resources and the protection and the enhancement of public health through proposing scientific evidence.’ In 2014, the 2nd annual conference, international symposium, and workshop were held to look back the accomplished outcomes of NECA and provide a blueprint for the future.

Objective

We aimed to take the opinions from various interested parties and agencies in order to reduce conflicts occurring in HTA process and find strategies to improve the evidence-based healthcare research and HTA in Korea.

□ Methods

To explore the strategies to improve the HTA system of NECA, we held the 2nd annual conference, international symposium, and horizon scanning workshop from March 26th to 28th in 2014.

I. 2nd NECA Annual Conference

The annual conference, celebrating the 5th anniversary of the NECA establishment was held on March 27, 2014 with the purpose of looking back on the outcomes of NECA and providing a blueprint for the future. The conference comprised 2 parts. The topic of Part 1 was "Past, present, and future of HTA" and that of Part 2 was "A new paradigm of evidence-based healthcare research and HTA". During the conference, we attempted to collect opinions from various interested parties and agencies to improve Korean evidence-based healthcare research and the HTA system. All the discussion process was open to the public.

II. International Symposium

The international symposium was held on March 28, 2014. Representatives from Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan presented and discussed the current status of HTA and future international collaborations among agencies and researchers.

III. Horizon Scanning Workshop

The Horizon Scanning workshop was held on March 26, 2014 at the NECA Conference room. The current status of the NIHR Horizon Scanning Centre in the UK and the HealthPACT in Australia was presented. The filtration and prioritisation was discussed in the group work session, which outcomes were considered to refine NECA H-SIGHT filtration process.

□ Results

Based on the experiences of NICE, they proposed to make efforts to 1)

obtain transparency and openness in HTA 2) provide a strategy for the political utilization of HTA results and 3) extend the opportunities of patients' participation in HTA. CADTH suggested to 1) focus on customers, 2) create unique principles for success, 3) be patient and consistent since changes of policy and healthcare behaviors take time, 4) allow stakeholders participating in a transparent and meaningful manner, 5) harmonize processes with scientific methods through appointing a chief scientist, developing guidance, collaborating with international partners, as well as providing on-going education and training, and 6) provide expert recommendations which is beyond reports and obtain manpower that enables to support knowledge mobilization and implementation.

Domestic industries and clinical experts requested to 1) obtain transparency of HTA procedures, 2) be timely to avoid the delay on introducing health technology, 3) balance HTA systems and procedures, 4) provide an opportunity to propose industry's opinions in the assessment step, 5) recognize the importance of patient-centered care and independent medical judgment, 6) understand characteristics of medical devices that are differentiated from medicine, 7) consider various social perspectives in HTA, and 8) use global HTA network in order to improve HTA criteria and methods.

Institutions related to research planning and development suggested that the results of NECA's research can be utilized as a useful evidence to evaluate the values of technology, particularly in planning, determination, and assessment of governmental R&D projects, thereby capable of breaking current fragmented and separated systems and implementing effective clinical trial development through establishment of collaboration systems.

The clinical experts mentioned that clinical studies including Korean patients were required because research from other country cannot be directly applied to the clinical settings in Korea, and in particular, cost effectiveness analyses reflecting domestic economic conditions were urgently needed. Also, they proposed that NECA strives for the establishment of

systematic database regarding medical information, and opening those data to the public is desirable. They also requested to construct a collaborative relationship through a global public organization network. In addition, clinical experts were requested to provide professional clinical knowledge in terms of research implementations and perform a key role for the result dissemination that can introduce to practical clinical settings.

□ Conclusions

NECA should focus on what kind of activities with whom through what kind of infra and what kind of characteristics, and how.

First, NECA should provide involvement strategies for stakeholders including the public or patients.

Second, for successful implementation of HTA of NECA, unique principles should be developed and an institutional strategy for political utilization should be prepared.

Third, in the implementation of NECA evidence-based healthcare research and HTA, transparency, openness, continuity, consistency, scientific robustness, and timeliness should be considered.

Forth, NECA should make an effort to spread the research outcomes effectively and maintain a closer network with domestic and international interagency and researchers.

Based on the efforts above, NECA should settle down evidence-based research and HTA apposite to the case in Korea, increase the acceptability of HTA by mediating the opinions from various stakeholders, and improve continuity of healthcare.

Key words

: health technology, information dissemination, social networking