

SBU's approach to ethics in HTA

Lars Sandman
National Centre for Priority Setting in Health Care, Linköping university
University of Borås
Västra Götaland Region
NT-council
SBU's council Brage

Background

- SBU had a fairly good track record of integrating ethical aspects in their projects – BUT level and approaches inconsistent – dependent upon the specific project leader or ethicist involved
- I was contacted to help develop an adapted approach based on previous work for a regional HTA-body adapting Hofmanns list
- Why an adapted approach?
 - Found the general lists to abstract and general to be used by ethically unskilled project leaders
 - Wanted an approach adapted to Swedish legislation and context

Methodology

- Started from the lists developed by Hofmann, EUneHTA, and myself to find a comprehensive approach
- Adapted these to the Swedish health-care legislation – e.g. the specific ethical platform form priority setting
- First draft was sent on review to 6 ethicists with different perspectives
- Second draft was sent on review to a large set of stakeholders:
 - Health care authorities
 - County councils
 - Professional organisations
 - Patient organisations
 - Academic institutions

The SBU approach

- Used to identify and stimulate reflection on ethical issues in most of SBUs project (some exceptions)
- Start with a general reflection without using the list early on in the project among the experts
- Systematically goes through the list – can result in identifying the need to involve an ethicist (sometimes identified beforehand in sensitive projects – e.g. shaken baby syndrom, prenatal diagnostics etc.)
- It has not been systematically evaluated – an impression is a quality improvement of the ethical reflections in the reports and in the competence of the project leaders
- Developed an adapted version for identifying knowledge gaps
- Now we are developing an adapted version fo social services

The SBU approach – the list

- Effects on health
 - How does the intervention affect health in terms of quality of life and life-length of the patient?
 - If there is lack of evidence for the intervention's effects, are there ethical problems with research in the area?
 - What degree of severity does the condition for which the intervention is a treatment have?
 - How is the health of third parties affected?
 - Conclusion in terms of balancing positive and negative effects given severity.

The SBU approach – the list

- In line with ethical values
 - How does the intervention reflect on equality and justice?
 - Does the intervention give patients the opportunity to be part of decision-making and make relevant decisions in relation to the intervention?
 - How does the intervention affect privacy and integrity?
 - Is the balance between cost and effect reasonable?
 - Conclusions
- Systemic effects that might affect access
 - Are there lack of resources or organisational problems that might affect access?
 - Are there professional values that might affect access?
 - Are the stakeholder interests that might affect access?
 - Conclusions

The SBU approach – the list

- Long term effects
 - Are there any long term ethical effects of the intervention?
- Conclusions of the ethical assessment
 - Reasons for and against using the intervention
 - Suggestions for modifications or specific requirements when it is used
- Read more:
 - Heintz E, Hultcrantz M, Jacobson S, Lintamo L, Levi R, Munthe C, Tranaeus S, Östlund P, Sandman L. 2015. A framework for systematic identification of relevant ethical aspects of health care technologies – the SBU approach. *The International journal of Health Technology Assessment*. 31: 3 124-130

Lars Sandman
lars.sandman@liu.se

www.liu.se