

TOP TIPS FOR ECONOMIC EVALUATION

1. Have a focussed question.
2. Read the brief.
3. How big is the existing literature and has the question been addressed before?
4. Can you identify appropriate comparators?
5. What perspective will the study take?
6. How would you collect data?
7. What type of analytic approach will you take?
8. How will you deal with uncertain and/or missing values?
9. Get "the team" together ASAP
10. Ensure the team includes expertise appropriate to answer your question (this might include health economist, statistician, trialist, information specialist)

Focus your question

- Don't try to answer too many questions
- For an economic evaluation, the question should be **well-defined and posed in answerable form**

Read the brief

- If you are reacting to a funding call read the brief in minute detail to ensure
 - You understand the question
 - You are answering the question
 - Then make sure your question is clear and justified

How big is the existing literature and has the question been addressed before?

- You may want to do a literature search to determine what is already out there
- Or get an information scientist to do a search for you
- You may find similar work already exists
- If so, how would your study be different and/or what would it add (there is little point in answering the same question again)
- How would you incorporate the existing literature into your study (eg formal evidence synthesis)
- Is the size of the literature manageable? How can it be limited if appropriate?
- If literature large, talk to experts! (this might be clinical experts or information scientists etc)

Can you identify appropriate comparators?

- Economic evaluation requires the comparison of costs and effects of **alternative strategies**
- **IE There cannot be a full economic evaluation without comparator(s)**
- It is important that these comparators are relevant and ideally the study should identify and incorporate **all appropriate** comparators (though this may not always be feasible)
- Appropriate comparators can be identified from clinical knowledge/experience, reviews of the literature

Perspective

- What is appropriate perspective?
 - Societal - Very broad but more difficult to conduct
 - NHS - Narrower perspective, easier to measure but may miss eg cost shifting between sectors
 - Other - In some instances it may be appropriate to consider perspective of particular groups or agencies but care should be exercised in choice of perspective

Data collection

- Several types of data collection used for economic evaluation
 - Patient/carer questionnaires
 - Medical records
 - Published estimates
- Most appropriate will depend on patient population/condition/type of study etc

Analytic approach

- What type of analysis would be best to answer the question?
 - Trial based cost-effectiveness evaluation?
 - Other trial based evaluation
 - Decision model
 - Other approaches

Uncertainty and missing data

- Economic evaluation always conducted under conditions of uncertainty....how will this be dealt with?
 - Sensitivity analysis
 - Probabilistic sensitivity analysis
- What about missing data?
 - Multiple imputation?
 - Other technique

The team

- Most important bit!
- Get the right team together early!!