



MEMORANDUM

To: Topic Selection Committee

From: Dan Ollendorf, Chief Review Officer and
Steve Pearson, President

Re: Ranking of Topics for Discussion

Date: March 21, 2008

Thank you for your participation in the process to select topics for the next cycle of ICER appraisals. We are looking to identify our next 2-3 topics at this time. We have solicited suggestions from each member of the committee and have exercised the prerogative of developing a preliminary priority ranking so that we can have enough time to discuss those at the top in some depth. Following is a summary of the process we have used to develop our rankings, as well as brief descriptions of the topics we will focus on during our call.

A total of 20 topics were recommended review during the initial solicitation process. All topics are shown on the Excel sheet included as an attachment. We rated these topics based on the following characteristics:

1. Existence of key clinical and/or economic value issues
2. Variation in existing practice
3. Presence of clear comparator(s)
4. Existing evidence on potential cost-effectiveness
5. Level of clinical equipoise
6. Potential economic impact
7. Reasonable scope for timely appraisal (i.e., 8-9 month cycle)

We selected 7 topics as the “top group” for discussion on our call, based on both our ratings and an interest in preserving the diversity of opinion among committee members. If anyone feels strongly that a topic left out of this group should be elevated for discussion, please let us know prior via email or a call. Brief summaries of the leading choices, including key value issues, potential comparators, and key technology assessments as well as ongoing studies, are available on the following page. The list of other suggested topics follows.

Topic Selection Matrix

Topic	Key Value Issue(s)	Potential Comparators	Selected Health Technology Assessments and Key Studies*
Artificial cervical disc replacement: Replacement of one or more diseased cervical discs with an artificial prosthetic disc in patients with degenerative disc disease and related neck/arm pain	Long-term efficacy and safety; patient selection; outcomes vs. conservative treatment or fusion	Discectomy with spinal fusion	HTA: BCBS TEC 11/2007 (-); NICE 11/2005 (+) Studies: Kineflex-C (N=350; 8/09; vs. fusion); Mobi-C (N=600; 2/08; vs. fusion)
Bariatric surgery: Surgical techniques to promote weight loss in obese individuals, including gastric bypass, in which stomach size is reduced and intestinal path is reconfigured; and adjustable gastric banding, in which the size of the opening from the esophagus to the stomach is reduced	Threshold of BMI at which most effective and cost-effective; potential for "prevention" of DM; durability of weight loss over long term; ? require failure of other weight-loss efforts; practitioner skill variation	Patient education; pharmacologic therapy	HTA: BCBS TEC 8/2005 (+/-); AHRQ 12/2003 (+/-); NICE (not yet started) Studies: GBP-Norway (N=240; 8/10; vs. conservative tx)
Catheter ablation in atrial fibrillation: Insertion of a catheter into the left atrial space of the heart and subsequent of radiofrequency energy to restore normal heart rhythm	Effects on long-term morbidity/mortality; lack of procedure standardization; concerns regarding use in younger, asymptomatic patients	Cardioversion, pharmacologic therapy	HTA: BCBS TEC 5/2006 (-); NICE 4/2006 (+); AHRQ (started 12/2007) Studies: Germany (N=130; 12/08; vs. cardioversion); MANTRA-PAF (N=300; 3/09; vs. drug tx); RAAFT (N=400; 12/09; vs. drug tx)
CT angiography: A relatively new application of advanced 64-slice computed tomography and contrast material to diagnose a variety of conditions, most commonly coronary artery disease	? Replace angiography or add-on; false positive/negative rates; patient risk stratification and selection; lowering the bar for testing; radiation harms; preference of patients for non-invasive testing	Cardiac catheterization with X-ray angiography	HTA: BCBS TEC 5/2005 (-); AHRQ 10/2006 (-) Studies: OMCAS (N=900; ?12/08; vs. conv. angio); CCTA (N=150; 7/08; vs. std. care)
Genetic testing for warfarin dosing: Use of a test examining the presence of variations in selected genes that represent risk factors for overanticoagulation with warfarin via metabolic (CYP2C9) and anticoagulation (VKORC1) processes	Capacity to change physician practice; degree of improvement in warfarin management and impact on patient outcomes; ? lower costs; system implementation questions	INR-based dose titration	HTA: AHRQ (not yet started) Studies: TKR/THR (N=270; 6/08; vs. usual care); PRECISE (N=500; ?7/09; vs. usual care)
Laparoscopic hysterectomy: Minimally-invasive surgical procedure that allows the uterus to be detached from inside the body by laparoscopic instruments while the surgeon is viewing the uterus, tubes, and ovaries through a camera	Appropriate indications vs. open procedure; rate of acute complications; impact of level of surgeon training; cost-savings accrued to which stakeholders?; patient preferences	Open total/subtotal abdominal or vaginal hysterectomy	HTA: NICE 11/2007 (+) Studies: None
MRI-based breast screening: A breast imaging technique that captures multiple cross-sectional views and combines them into 2- and 3-dimensional images; typically performed as an adjunct to mammography-based screening in high-risk individuals	Appropriate target population (i.e., standardized definition of "high risk"); concerns regarding tradeoffs between sensitivity and specificity (and related biopsy rate); ?cost-effectiveness	Mammography and clinical examination without MRI	HTA: BCBS TEC 6/2006 (-); AHRQ 2/2006 (+/-) Studies: Mayo (N=120; 3/09; vs. MBI); MRI Pilot (N=200; ?12/09; vs. mammo+exam); MONET (N=440; 11/08; vs. mammo/US)

*Key Studies: Large-scale trials or cohort studies with expected completion in next 36 months; shown with expected N, date of completion, and comparator(s)

Topic Selection Matrix

Topic	Key Value Issue(s)	Potential Comparators	Selected Health Technology Assessments and Key Studies*
Artificial intervertebral disc replacement			
Early behavioral intervention in autism			
Epidural steroids for low back pain			
Gamma camera breast scintimammography			
Genetic susceptibility testing			
Laparoscopic colectomy			
Lumbar disc decompression			
Mechanical embolectomy in stroke			
Overnight oximetry for obstructive sleep apnea			
Peripheral ultrafiltration in CHF			
Pre-implantation genetic testing for single gene defects			
Pre-surgical androgen deprivation therapy of prostate			
Surgical treatment of low back pain (all)			

*Key Studies: Large-scale trials or cohort studies with expected completion in next 36 months; shown with expected N, date of completion, and comparator(s)