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ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN SELECTING HEALTH CARE TECHNOLOGIES

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Background & Context: The Israel National Health Insurance Law, enacted in 1995, determines a National List of Health Services (NLHS) to which all citizens are entitled. In order to maintain the high standard of medical care provided by the Israel healthcare system, the NLHS should be updated periodically. The NLHS can be updated only by allocation of funds from the Government. The rapid development of medical technologies together with the limited resources available in the healthcare system makes priority setting inevitable. In 1998, a systematic process to adopt new medical technologies within the NLHS was initiated. The decision making process for inclusion of health technologies into the NLHS is based on the recommendations of a National Public Advisory Committee which integrates not only the clinical and economical aspects, but social and ethical values. Members of the committee include representatives of government officials, health professional, economists, and of the public amongst others and ethicist and a rabbi.

Content & Findings: Decision makers strive to improve quality of life and welfare of the population, but at the same time they confront the dilemma of balancing health benefits with a shortage of resources, therefore, rationing is required. The prioritization of health technologies provoke many ethical dilemmas that the decision makers and the society in Israel are facing throughout the years, such as: what should be given priority? Is it costly medications for relatively few people or inexpensive ones for many?

Conclusion: Israel offers a unique example of implementing a methodology of health technology assessment (HTA), combined with a priority setting process debated within a National Public Advisory Committee forum which takes into account cultural and moral values. After years of experience, this process is considered by many health policy analysts in Israel and abroad, to be a breakthrough on an international scale.

Biography

Miriam I Siebzeher is a Deputy Director and Senior Researcher Israeli Center for Technology Assessment in Health Care (ICTAHC). She holds two MA's in Nursing from Tel Aviv University and in Public Administration from Harvard's John F Kennedy School of Government. She received her PhD in Health Management from Ben-Gurion University. She is the Chief Nurse Officer of the Central Health District, Ministry of Health. She has published more than 30 articles in professional Israeli and international journals. She has lectured in professional educational programs in Tel-Aviv University. During 20 years, she is a Consultant to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Division for International Cooperation on Health Issues for Latin America and selected African countries. She has received professional awards: The International Council of Nurses and 3M, Israel Award for outstanding professional achievements, the Ministry of Health Outstanding Employee Award in recognition of highest level of excellence, The Prime Minister Office Civil Service Commission Outstanding Governmental Employee Award.

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