



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# **Knowledge Sharing and Impact Assessment**

Health Technology Assessment Directorate

**2023 REPORT**

## About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory body established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

Reporting to the Minister for Health and engaging with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HIQA has responsibility for the following:

- **Setting standards for health and social care services** — Developing person-centred standards and guidance, based on evidence and international best practice, for health and social care services in Ireland.
- **Regulating social care services** — The Chief Inspector of Social Services within HIQA is responsible for registering and inspecting residential services for older people and people with a disability, and children’s special care units.
- **Regulating health services** — Regulating medical exposure to ionising radiation.
- **Monitoring services** — Monitoring the safety and quality of permanent international protection accommodation service centres, health services and children’s social services against the national standards. Where necessary, HIQA investigates serious concerns about the health and welfare of people who use health services and children’s social services.
- **Health technology assessment** — Evaluating the clinical and cost effectiveness of health programmes, policies, medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic and surgical techniques, health promotion and protection activities, and providing advice to enable the best use of resources and the best outcomes for people who use our health service.
- **Health information** — Advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland’s health and social care services.
- **National Care Experience Programme** — Carrying out national service-user experience surveys across a range of health and social care services, with the Department of Health and the HSE.

Visit [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) for more information.

## Contents

About the Health Information and Quality Authority .....	2
Overview of the Health Technology Assessment Directorate .....	4
1. Introduction .....	9
2. Outputs .....	11
3. Reach .....	21
4. Engagement .....	29
5. Change .....	35
6. Conclusion .....	41

## Overview of the Health Technology Assessment Directorate

Health technology assessments (HTAs) are designed to inform safe and effective health policies that are both patient-focused and achieve best value for money. HTA is a multidisciplinary activity that requires a broad range of expertise, comprehensive evidence synthesis and data analysis, and ongoing stakeholder engagement. HTA can cover a range of fields, including clinical effectiveness and safety, cost effectiveness and budget impact, organisational and social aspects, and ethical and legal issues.

The Health Act 2007 outlines the statutory functions of HIQA and this underpins the basis for the conduct of HTAs.

These functions are:

1. To evaluate the clinical and cost effectiveness of health technologies including drugs and provide advice arising out of the evaluation to the Minister and the Executive.
2. At the request or with the approval of the Minister to review and make recommendations as the Authority thinks fit in respect of the services, to ensure the best outcomes for the resources available to the Executive.
3. To evaluate available information respecting the services and the health and welfare of the population.

We develop national HTA guidelines to inform the production of timely, consistent and reliable assessments that are relevant to the needs of the people using health and social care services. We also conduct evidence synthesis to support the development of National Clinical Guidelines and inform the development of health policy. In 2023, we took on a new function to provide generic justification of new practices involving medical exposure to ionising radiation.

The work of the HTA Directorate in 2023 was conducted by over 40 staff and was broadly classified into eight main functions:

- Core HTA
- Immunisation HTA
- Screening HTA
- Health Research Board – Collaboration in Ireland for Clinical Effectiveness Reviews (HRB-CICER) to support development of National Clinical Guidelines
- COVID-19 evidence synthesis
- Public health policy evidence synthesis

- Generic justification of ionising radiation
- Strategy, support and research (SSR)

## **Core HTA**

The core HTA function informs investment and disinvestment decisions by the Minister for Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) on a broad range of health technologies. A health technology is defined as an intervention developed to prevent, diagnose or treat medical conditions; promote health; provide rehabilitation; or organise healthcare delivery. The intervention can be a diagnostic test, device, medicine, vaccine, procedure, programme, or system. A prioritisation process is deployed to ensure that the topics included in the work plan are of maximum benefit to the healthcare system. The core HTA function works to ensure that the best available evidence is presented to support decision-making in order to promote an equitable, efficient, and high-quality health system.

## **Immunisation**

The Immunisation Team was established in 2023 and is funded to conduct HTAs and evidence syntheses to inform national immunisation policies as prioritised by the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health.

## **Screening HTA**

The National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC) was established in 2019 as an independent advisory committee that advises the Minister for Health and Department of Health on new proposals for and revisions to population-based screening programmes. Since 2020, the Screening HTA Team in HIQA has provided evidence synthesis (including HTAs) and evidence-informed advice to support the work of NSAC. This support has involved assessments of both new and existing population-based screening programmes, and reviews of processes used to inform policy-making on screening (such as prioritisation and decision-making approaches, and the development of ethical frameworks).

## **HRB-CICER**

In 2016, HIQA was awarded a five-year contract for €2.25 million by the Health Research Board (HRB) to establish the HRB Collaboration in Ireland for Clinical Effectiveness Reviews (HRB-CICER). An additional year of funding and a no-cost extension were approved by HRB, extending the work programme until 2024. HRB-CICER conducts evidence synthesis to inform the development of National Clinical Guidelines by guideline development groups. The HRB-CICER team comprises a dedicated multidisciplinary research team supported by staff from the HTA Directorate and Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Trinity College Dublin, as well as national and international clinical and methodological experts. The

National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) is a ministerially appointed committee made up of representatives from various interested parties from healthcare in Ireland and provides a framework for developing clinical guidelines. Through the NCEC, the Minister for Health in Ireland approves National Clinical Guidelines. These are then implemented in the Irish healthcare system.

### **COVID-19 evidence synthesis and advice**

HIQA began to provide evidence synthesis to support the national public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 at the request of the Department of Health.

A COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis Team was established in HIQA's HTA Directorate to provide evidence synthesis to support the work of National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), NPHE sub-groups and other groups in the Department of Health and HSE working on the national public health response to COVID-19.

In September 2020, HIQA commenced providing evidence-based advice to NPHE on behalf of the Minister for Health. The advice was informed by evidence synthesis undertaken across all relevant domains of HTA and health services research. HIQA established a COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to provide expert interpretation of the relevant evidence and to inform the development of the Advice from HIQA to NPHE. The EAG comprised nominated representatives from the relevant clinical and public health stakeholder groups, patient representation and methodological expertise.

In February 2022, NPHE was stood down. In April 2022, the Minister for Health established the COVID-19 Advisory Group (CAG). HIQA supported the CAG until it was stood down by the Minister for Health subsequent to the WHO pronouncement in May 2023 that the COVID-19 was no longer a global health emergency.

### **Public Health policy evidence synthesis and advice**

The Public Health Team, which replaced the COVID-19 Team, was established in 2023 to conduct evidence syntheses and provide evidence-based advice to inform national public health policy, as prioritised by the Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health.

### **Generic Justification of Ionising Radiation Practices**

Under SI 256 of 2018, HIQA is responsible for the generic justification of new practices involving medical exposure to ionising radiation (MEIR) before they are generally adopted. HIQA may also consider the justification of existing practices when new and important information becomes available about the effectiveness or safety of the practice or about alternative practices that could replace it. HIQA is also responsible for the preparation of guidelines for the use of MEIR in asymptomatic individuals for the early detection of disease, but outside of a

screening programme. The ionising radiation evidence review team in HIQA's HTA Directorate assists HIQA in fulfilling these functions. HIQA has convened a MEIR Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to support it in its role as the competent authority. HIQA appointed Professor Mary Coffey as the independent chairperson. Members of the EAG include representatives of patient organisations, regulatory authorities and key professional bodies.

### **Strategy, Support and Research**

The Strategy, Support and Research (SSR) Team was established in 2023. The overarching aim of this team is to develop strategy and policy, to enable and enhance research activities, and to provide support to the rest of the Directorate to allow it to meet its business plan objectives. The SSR function provides cross function support to the HTA Directorate in the areas of research, programme management, administration, library, corporate reporting and risk management.

Image 1: Members of the HTA Directorate at a directorate away day in Kilkenny (May 2023)



Image 2: Members of the HTA Directorate participating in the directorate away day workshop in December 2023





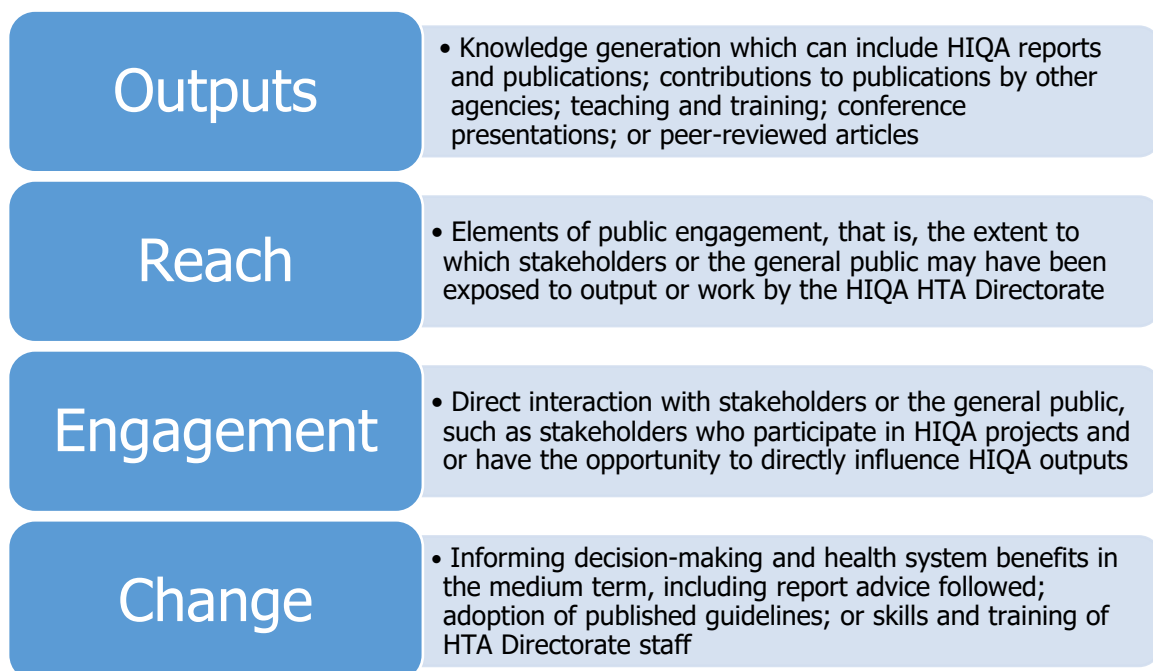
## 1. Introduction

The impact or influence of HTA Directorate activity is evaluated to assess its reach and contribution to decision-making and whether this is proportionate to the resources used to deliver it. Accordingly, this report follows the HTA knowledge sharing and influence measurement framework developed by the HTA Directorate and approved by the Board of HIQA in 2019. The framework outlines a broad set of metrics capturing different facets of knowledge sharing and influence across all HTA Directorate activity. The framework is only designed to capture short or medium-

*This report documents impact metrics for 2023.*

term impacts. Long-term impact on health and health services, or on economic measures, cannot be captured within this framework due to the time lag associated with the emergence of these impacts, and the challenges in attributing such impacts or outcomes to a specific activity of the HTA Directorate. It is important to note that benefits are likely to accumulate over time, so the reported impact is dependent on the time point at which it was measured. This report documents the impact metrics for 2023.

**Figure 1. Metrics for measuring impact of HTA Directorate activity**



# HTA Impact Report 2023 Snapshot



**4,039**

There were 4,039 views of our 130+ HTA outputs, which were downloaded from our website over 1,600 times.

**3,094**

Clicks on our LinkedIn postings about our HTA (1,619) and Evidence Synthesis Bulletin (1,475) publications.



**39**

Workshops, presentations and posters delivered at national and international conferences, workshops and seminars.



**23**

Public Health and COVID-19 reports (6); HTA reports (5) and protocol (1); screening reports (2) and protocol (1); immunisation reports (1); HRB-CICER reports (2); and generic justification of ionising radiation practices reports (5) published.



**2023**

## 2. Outputs

Outputs refer to knowledge generation which can include HIQA reports and publications; contributions to publications by other agencies; teaching and training; and other forms of dissemination such as conference presentations or peer-reviewed articles. The following lists the outputs of the HTA Directorate in 2023, categorised by deliverable type.

### COVID-19 reports published

- Evidence summary provided to the Health Service Executive:
  - *International review of the epidemiology of Long COVID*
  - *Interventions to improve Long COVID symptoms: A systematic review*

### Public Health reports published

- Reviews provided to the Department of Health:
  - *Review of national public health strategies in selected countries*
- Evidence overview provided to the Department of Health:
  - *Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections*
- Descriptive analysis provided to the Department of Health:
  - *An overview of national approaches to stockpiling of medical countermeasures for public health emergencies*
- Public consultation surveys:
  - *Analysis of public consultation surveys to inform the work of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group*

### HTA reports published

- *HTA of repatriation of paediatric haematopoietic stem cell transplant services to Ireland*
- *A rapid HTA of gene expression profiling tests for guiding the use of adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage invasive breast cancer*
- *HTA of Domiciliary Invasive Ventilation for Adults with Spinal Cord Injuries*
- *HTA of the expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox) vaccination*
- *Rapid Health Technology Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus*
- *Herpes Zoster (shingles) vaccination: protocol for a health technology assessment*

### Screening reports published

- *HTA of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme*
- *Protocol for the evidence review of universal ultrasound screening for developmental dysplasia of the hip in infants in Ireland*
- *Health technology assessment of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme*

### Immunisation reports published

- *Rapid health technology assessment of the extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme to include those aged 50 to 64 years (general population)*

### Generic Justification of Ionising Radiation Practices reports published

- *Methods for Generic Justification of New Practices in Ionising Radiation*
- *Lutetium oxodotreotide for the treatment of metastatic or inoperable gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumours (GEP-NETs): Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision*
- *A slot-scanning, biplanar, digital X-ray imaging system for the evaluation and monitoring of orthopaedic conditions: Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision*
- *Ultra-hypofractionated adjuvant radiotherapy for breast cancer: Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision*
- *<sup>18</sup>F-prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) PET/CT imaging for the staging of high-risk or recurrent prostate cancer: Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision*

### Reports conducted to support the work of the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee and the development of National Clinical Guidelines.

- *Infection Prevention Control National Clinical Guideline*
  - Systematic reviews
  - Budget impact analysis

### Teaching delivered

- Introduction to HTA, Pharmacy (BPharm) students, University College Cork
- Introduction to HTA, RCSI Undergraduates
- Introduction to HTA, Diploma in Health Economics, Institute of Public Administration

- Introduction to HTA, MSc in Pharmaceutical Medicine, Trinity College Dublin
- Introduction to HTA, MSc in Public Health, University College Dublin
- The Burden of Financial Costs of Healthcare for People with Multimorbidity, Clinical Effectiveness Unit, Department of Health
- Overview of GRADE (Grades of recommendation, assessment, development and evaluation) and the Evidence to Decision Framework, Clinical Effectiveness Unit, Department of Health
- Ionising radiation team in HTA Directorate, BSc Radiography Students, University College Dublin

### Conference oral presentations and workshops delivered

- Oral presentation
  - Jordan K, O'Donnell H, Clyne B, Harrington P, Teljeur C, Ryan M. Metabolic surgery for the treatment of comorbid Type 2 Diabetes and obesity in Ireland: a health technology assessment. Structured Population health, Policy and Health-services Research Education SPHeRE 2023
  - Walsh K, Paone S, Spillane S, Carrigan M, Harrington P, Teljeur C, Ryan M. A scoping review of international guidance for domiciliary invasive ventilation in adults with high cervical spinal cord injuries. SPHeRE 2023
  - Ahern S, Walsh K, Paone S, Carrigan M, Harrington P, Teljeur C, Ryan M. An overview of reviews of the clinical effectiveness and safety of varicella vaccination. SPHeRE 2023
  - Cardwell K, Broderick N, McManus L, Tyner B, Masukume G, Harrington P, Connolly M, Larkin L, Clyne B, Sharp M, Ryan M, O'Neill M. Lessons from the response to COVID-19 to inform strengthening of Essential Public Health Functions. SPHeRE 2023
  - Tyner B, Cardwell K, Plunkett T, Cormican M, Clyne B, Quigley J, Comber L, Carrigan M, Smith SM, O'Neill M, Ryan M. Effectiveness of all single patient room accommodation in reducing incidence of hospital-acquired infection in general acute settings: a systematic review. SPHeRE 2023
  - Carrigan, M. Using PRESS (Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies) for peer review of search strategies. [Health Sciences Libraries Group \(HSLG\) Conference 2023](#)
  - Norris M, Comaskey F, McLoughlin C, Merriman, N, O' Mahony A, Harrington P, O'Neill M, Ryan M. International review of the epidemiology of long COVID. Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland (IDSI) 14th Annual Scientific Meeting
  - Ahern S, Murphy A, Ryan M, Teljeur C. Universal childhood varicella (chickenpox) vaccination in Ireland: a cost-utility analysis. Cork University Business School Postgraduate Research Symposium
  - Clyne B, Sharp MK, O'Neill M, Pollock D, Lynch R, Amog K, Ryan M, Smith SM, Mahtani K, Booth A, Godfrey C, Munn Z, Tricco A. Updating the web-based "Right Review" tool: an international Delphi process. Cochrane Colloquium 2023

- Cardwell K, Quigley K, Clyne B, Tyner B, Carrigan M, Smith SM, Lynch R, Hughes C, Bradley D, Kinsella M, Holland D, Ryan M, O'Neill M. Processes for updating clinical guidelines: a systematic review. Guidelines International Network (G-I-N) 2023
- Murray R, Lynch R, O'Neill M, Smith SM, Mahtani KR, Ryan M, Clyne B, Sharp MK. Communicating evidence synthesis: Co-designing summary formats with end users. G-I-N 2023
- Sharp MK. Updating the web-based 'Right Review' tool: An international modified Delphi process. G-I-N 2023
- Cardwell K, Clyne B, Tyner B, McLoughlin C, McDowell C, Teljeur C, Spillane D, Comaskey F, O'Donnell H, Cardwell K, Jordan K, Walsh K, O'Brien K, Comber L, McManus L, Larkin L, Carrigan M, Norris M, O'Neill M, Merriman N, Harrington P, Carty P, Ahern S, Spillane S, Ryan M. Covid 19 – rapid response research collation in response to policy needs. Department of Health Conference 2023
- Murray R, Lynch R, O'Neill M, Smith SM, Mahtani KR, Ryan M, Clyne B, Shark MK. Communicating evidence synthesis: co-designing summary formats with end users. European Public Health (EPH) 2023
- Workshop
  - Faraldo-Valles M, O'Neill M, Schunemann H, Verstijnen I. Towards a practical model of collaboration; Barriers & Solutions along the Ecosystem of Health Decision Making. G-I-N 2023

Image 3: Members of the HTA Directorate at the ISPOR Europe conference in Copenhagen  
 Left to right: Conor Teljeur, Kieran Walsh, Máirín Ryan, Susan Ahern, Orla Jenkins



Image 4: Members of the HTA Directorate and a colleague from RCSI at the G-I-N conference in Glasgow

Left to right: Melissa Sharpe (RCSI), Shelley O'Neill, Barrie Tyner, Tom Lynch, Shibu Shrestha



Image 5: Members of the HTA Directorate at the European Public Health conference in Dublin

Left to right: Michelle Norris, Cillian McDowell, Valerie Power



## Conference posters presented

- Poster presentation
  - Ahern S, Carrigan M, Harrington P, Murphy A, Teljeur C, Ryan M. [\*A rapid review of economic models of childhood varicella vaccination.\*](#) SPHeRE 2023
  - Ahern S, Teljeur C, Murphy A, Ryan M. [\*An Economic Evaluation of Universal Childhood Varicella Vaccination in Ireland.\*](#) ISPOR 2023
  - Ahern S, Teljeur C, Ryan M. [\*How Many Simulations of a Dynamic Transmission Model are Enough to Estimate Uncertainty?\*](#) ISPOR 2023
  - Giusti M, O'Sullivan L, Harrington P, Ryan M, McGarry M, Dullea A, O'Brien K, Persiani N. [\*Generic justification of medical exposure to ionising radiation in two European countries.\*](#) European Public Health 2023
  - Hyland N, Jordan K, O'Donnell H, Byrne D, Byrne P, Cardwell C, Clyne B, Harrington P, Spillane S, Ryan M, Teljeur C. [\*Metabolic Surgery for the Treatment of Obesity in Type II Diabetes; Is it effective and is it safe? Outcomes of a Systematic Review.\*](#) European Congress on Obesity 2023
  - Idris A, Clyne B, Jordan K, Ryan M. *A review of international approaches to HTA: how do mechanisms of stakeholder engagement and research dissemination differ?* RCSI Research Day 2023
  - Idris A, Clyne B, Jordan K, Ryan M. [\*A review of international approaches to HTA: how do mechanisms of stakeholder engagement and research dissemination differ?\*](#) International Conference for Healthcare and Medical Students (ICHAMS) conference 2023
  - Jordan K, Finnegan E, Dillon S, Maher A, Comber L, O'Donnell H, Carrigan M, O'Neill M, Harrington P, Spillane S, Ryan M. [\*Systematic Review of the Cost Effectiveness of Newborn Screening for Spinal Muscular Atrophy.\*](#) ISPOR 2023
  - Jordan K, O'Donnell H, Clyne B, Harrington P, Teljeur C, Ryan M. [\*Metabolic surgery is an underutilised intervention for patients with comorbid T2D and obesity in Ireland.\*](#) SPHeRE 2023
  - Lynch T, Burke E, McDowell C, McLoughlin C, O'Neill M, Spillane S, Ryan M. *Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections.* National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) 2023
  - Maher A, Comber L, Finnegan E, Byrne D, Carrigan M, O'Neill M, Harrington P, Spillane S, Ryan M. [\*Systematic Review of the Cost Effectiveness of Newborn Screening for Severe Combined Immunodeficiency.\*](#) ISPOR 2023
  - Murray R, Lynch R, O'Neill M, Smith SM, Mahtani KR, Ryan M, Clyne B, Shark MK. *Communicating evidence syntheses: co-designing summary formats with end users.* NPSO 2023
  - Murray R, Sharp MK, Razidan A, Hibbitts B, Ryan M, Mahtani KR, Lynch R, Smith SM, O'Neill M, Schünemann H, Munn Z, Clyne B. *Investigating how the GRADE Evidence to Decision (EtD) framework is used in Clinical Guidelines: A scoping review.* NPSO 2023
  - Quigley J. [\*Scoping review of patient centred care.\*](#) SPHeRE 2023



- Teljeur C, Walsh K, O'Donnell H, Spillane S, O'Neill M, Harrington P, et al. [An Overview of the Challenges in the HTA of Interventions involving healthcare reorganisation](#). ISPOR 2023
- Tyner B, Cardwell K, Plunkett T, Cormican M, Clyne B, Quigley J, Comber L, Carrigan M, Smith SM, O'Neill M, Ryan M. *Effectiveness of all single-patient room accommodation in reducing incidence of hospital-acquired infection in general acute settings: a systematic review*. University College Cork Safe Patient Care Conference 2023
- Tyner B, Cardwell K, Plunkett T, Cormican M, Clyne B, Quigley J, Comber L, Carrigan M, Smith SM, O'Neill M, Ryan M. [Effectiveness of all single patient room accommodation in reducing incidence of hospital-acquired infection in general acute settings: a systematic review](#). G-I-N 2023
- Walsh K, Byrne D, Swanton D, Paone S, Finnegan E, O'Donnell H, Spillane Harrington P, Teljeur C, Ryan M. [Health Technology Assessment of Domiciliary Invasive Ventilation for Adults with Spinal Cord Injuries](#). ISPOR 2023
- Conference abstract publications
  - Ahern S, Teljeur C, Murphy A, Ryan M. [EE442 An Economic Evaluation of Universal Childhood Varicella Vaccination in Ireland](#). Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S136.
  - Ahern S, Teljeur C, Ryan M. [MSR87 How Many Simulations of a Dynamic Transmission Model Are Enough to Estimate Uncertainty?](#) Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S409.
  - Giusti M, O'Sullivan L, Harrington P, Ryan M, McGarry M, Dullea A, et al. [Generic justification of medical exposure to ionising radiations in two European countries](#). European Journal of Public Health. 2023;33(Supplement\_2):ckad160. 1372.
  - Jordan K, Finnegan E, Maher A, Dillon S, Comber L, O'Donnell H, et al. [EE648 Systematic Review of the Cost Effectiveness of Newborn Screening for Spinal Muscular Atrophy](#). Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S178.
  - Maher A, Comber L, Finnegan E, Byrne D, Carrigan M, O'Neill M, et al. [EE549 Systematic Review of the Cost Effectiveness of Newborn Screening for Severe Combined Immunodeficiency](#). Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S158.
  - Teljeur C, Walsh K, O'Donnell H, Spillane S, O'Neill M, Harrington P, et al. [HTA47 An Overview of the Challenges in the HTA of Interventions Involving Healthcare Reorganisation](#). Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S329.
  - Walsh K, Byrne D, Swanton D, Paone S, Finnegan E, O'Donnell H, et al. [HTA150 Health Technology Assessment of Domiciliary Invasive Ventilation for Adults With Spinal Cord Injuries](#). Value in Health. 2023;26(12):S347.

### Peer-reviewed publications

- Cardwell K, Clyne B, Broderick N, Tyner B, Masukume G, Larkin L, et al. [Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic in selected countries to inform strengthening of public health systems: a qualitative study](#). Public Health. 2023;225:343-52.

- Cardwell K, Quigley J, Clyne B, Tyner B, Carrigan M, Smith SM, et al. [\*Systematic review finds processes used internationally, to update clinical guidelines, lack consistency and detail.\*](#) Evidence & Policy. 2023;19(4):572-90.
- Chong MC, Sharp MK, Smith SM, O'Neill M, Ryan M, Lynch R, et al. [\*Strong recommendations from low certainty evidence: a cross-sectional analysis of a suite of national guidelines.\*](#) BMC Medical Research Methodology. 2023;23(1):68.
- Clyne B, Hynes L, Kirwan C, McGeehan M, Byrne P, Killilea M, et al. [\*Perspectives on the production, and use, of rapid evidence in decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic: a qualitative study.\*](#) BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine. 2023;28(1):48-57.
- Dullea A, O'Sullivan L, Carrigan M, Ahern S, McGarry M, O'Brien K, Harrington P, Walsh KA, Smith SM, Ryan M. [\*Diagnostic accuracy of 18F Prostate Specific Membrane Antigen \(PSMA\) PET-CT radiotracers in staging and restaging of high-risk prostate cancer patients and patients with biochemical recurrence: protocol for an overview of reviews.\*](#) HRB Open Research. 2023 Sep 20;6:57.
- O'Reilly S, Kathryn Carroll H, Murray D, Burke L, McCarthy T, O'Connor R, Spillane S et al. [\*Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer care in Ireland – Perspectives from a COVID-19 and Cancer Working Group.\*](#) Journal of Cancer Policy. 2023;36:100414.

### Invited presentations given

- Invited session chair
  - Ryan M. HTA Roundtable Co-chair. ISPOR 2023.
- Invited oral presentation
  - Dullea A. Radiation Safety Study Day 2023: HIQA Update. National Radiation Safety Study Day
  - Ryan M. Development of clinical guidelines at the national level. Irish Society for Clinical Microbiology.
  - Spillane, S. HIQA's role in assessment of cancer interventions. RCSI webinar series: The Future of Cancer in Ireland: Health Economic Perspectives
  - Spillane S. When and how to integrate environmental impacts in HTA – considerations from HIQA (Ireland). INAHTA Congress.
- Invited panel discussion
  - Ryan M. MedTech Innovation: Addressing Healthcare System Inefficiencies and Workforce Constraints. MedTech Forum 1 June 2023.
  - Teljeur C. Implementation of HTA Regulation at Full Speed – What's up and Will Countries use it? MedTech Forum 1 June 2023.

### Vignette 1

The Immunisation function was established in 2023 and is funded to conduct HTAs and evidence synthesis to inform immunisation policy as prioritised by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the Department of Health.

The first report from the Immunisation function was a rapid HTA of the extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme to include those aged 50 to 64 years (general population).

In Ireland, guidance from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommends that all those aged 50 to 64 years receive an annual influenza vaccination. However, vaccination of this age group is only reimbursed for selected risk groups (for example, healthcare workers or those at increased risk of severe influenza) as part of the HSE's Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme.

To inform a decision as to whether vaccination for this age group should be reimbursed for the 2023-2024 season, the CMO requested a rapid HTA on expanding the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme in Ireland to include reimbursement for those aged 50 to 64 years old regardless of risk status. This HTA was [published](#) on 18 August 2023.

"Thank you to you and your colleagues for this, I think it is an excellent assessment of the situation. I think the evidence is well laid out, and despite the limitations of the data, the conclusion is appropriately measured."

– member of the EAG

This highlights the high standard of work completed and the importance of evidence synthesis in supporting healthcare system decision-making.

## Vignette 2

In 2016, HIQA was awarded funding by the Health Research Board (HRB) to establish the HRB Collaboration in Ireland for Clinical Effectiveness Reviews (HRB-CICER).

HRB-CICER aims to deliver a high-quality evidence base with regard to systematic review of clinical and cost effectiveness and budget impact analysis, to support the development of evidence-based recommendations in National Clinical Guidelines. These guidelines are quality assured by the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) and mandated by the Minister for Health.

HRB-CICER also provides training in evidence synthesis and advises the NCEC on improvements in methodological developments in evidence generation, and on research gaps in the evidence base.

HRB-CICER supported the development of the [Infection Prevention Control National Clinical Guideline](#), which was launched on 11 May 2023. We conducted a systematic review of the clinical and cost effectiveness of interventions to improve adherence to hand hygiene recommendations in healthcare settings; a systematic review of the clinical and cost effectiveness of the use of all single patient room accommodation in reducing the incidence of healthcare-associated infections in general acute settings; and a budget impact analysis to estimate the costs of implementing the clinical recommendations.

Feedback from stakeholders included:

"Open discussions at HRB-CICER engagements for the process were supportive to address questions and requirements to support the HRB-CICER work and deliverables – it was greatly appreciated."

"The approach was at all times very collaborative and there was a strong commitment to identifying and adhering to the question and the evidence base."

"Engagements were always timely with lots of time for open discussion, questions, and learning opportunities. Response times were prompt and excellent."

Image 6: Members of the HIQA HRB-CICER Team (Barrie Tyner, Shibu Shrestha, Tom Lynch) at the launch of the Infection Prevention Control National Clinical Guideline.

Front row: Eimear Brannigan, Guideline Chair Martin Cormican, Rosarie Lynch  
Back row: Audrey Lambourne, Brid McGoldrick, **Barrie Tyner**, John Tuffy, **Shibu Shrestha**, **Tom Lynch**, Deidre Holland, Josephine Galway, Paul Ryan, Lauren Webster, Michael Carton



### 3. Reach

The concept of reach is intended to capture elements of public engagement – specifically, the extent to which stakeholders or the general public may have been exposed to output or work by the HIQA HTA Directorate.

The number of downloads provide a measure of people actively seeking HIQA HTA outputs. These are measured as the total number of downloads for a document in the period 1 January to 31 December 2023.

As reports are shared directly by email with the targeted stakeholders (that is, Department of Health, the HSE, the various EAGs, and so on), such downloads are not tracked by the presented website metrics.

HRB-CICER reports are hosted on the website of the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) as opposed to the HIQA website.

#### Report downloads from HIQA website

- *Interventions to improve Long COVID symptoms: A systematic review* (286 views, 157 downloads)
- *HTA of the expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox) vaccination* (271 views, 150 downloads)
- *Rapid Health Technology Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus* (119 views, 24 downloads)
- *International review of the epidemiology of long COVID* (116 views, 65 downloads)
- *Health Technology Assessment of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (87 views, 47 downloads)
- *HTA of Domiciliary Invasive Ventilation for Adults with Spinal Cord Injuries* (85 views, 71 downloads)
- *An overview of national approaches to stockpiling of medical countermeasures for public health emergencies* (74 views, 35 downloads)
- *A rapid HTA of gene expression profiling tests for guiding the use of adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage invasive breast cancer* (64 views, 38 downloads)
- *Rapid health technology assessment of the extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme to include those aged 50 to 64 years (general population)* (54 views, 41 downloads)
- *HTA of repatriation of paediatric haematopoietic stem cell transplant services to Ireland* (52 views, 34 downloads)
- *Analysis of public consultation surveys to inform the work of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group* (44 views, 53 downloads)
- *A slot-scanning, biplanar, digital X-ray imaging system for the evaluation and monitoring of orthopaedic conditions: Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (20 views, 11 downloads)

- *Lu oxodotreotide for the treatment of metastatic or inoperable gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumours (GEP-NETs): Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (11 views, 7 downloads)
- *Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections* (11 views, 2 downloads)
- *Review of national public health strategies in selected countries* (10 views, 4 downloads)
- *Protocol for the evidence review of universal ultrasound screening for developmental dysplasia of the hip in infants in Ireland* (8 views, 5 downloads)
- *Herpes Zoster (shingles) vaccination: protocol for a health technology assessment* (7 views, 1 download)
- *Methods for Generic Justification of New Practices in Ionising Radiation* (7 views, 6 downloads)
- *Health technology assessment of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (5 views, 2 downloads)
- *Ultra-hypofractionated adjuvant radiotherapy for breast cancer: evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (4 views, 1 download)
- *<sup>18</sup>F-prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) PET/CT imaging for the staging of high-risk or recurrent prostate cancer: Evidence synthesis to support a generic* (3 views, 0 downloads)

In 2022, an Evidence Synthesis Bulletin was launched to summarise and disseminate widely the work HIQA completed at the request of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) and related groups tasked with the national COVID-19 response. During periods of high production and frequent output, the bulletin allowed for all reports, advice and analysis to be collated and made easily accessible to academics, other stakeholders and the public. The bulletin now includes all HTA Directorate evidence synthesis outputs and is published on our social media platforms and website and sent directly to subscribers. In 2023, we published three bulletins summarising all our outputs throughout the year. The bulletins had 63 views and 19 downloads from the HIQA website.

When examining regional and national media coverage between January to December 2023, HIQA's Dr Mairin Ryan, Deputy CEO and Director of Health Technology Assessment, was quoted 18 times; Dr Conor Teljeur, Chief Scientist, was quoted 42 times; and Michelle O'Neill, Deputy Director of Health Technology Assessment, was quoted seven times.

#### Media coverage in 2023 on HTA evidence outputs

- Overall media clippings - 168
- Print - 40
- Online – 108
- Broadcast – 20 (18 radio, 2 television)

## Media coverage in 2023 of HTA evidence outputs



Three HTA team members were interviewed on radio or television in 2023. Dr. Mairin Ryan was interviewed on television once and made four radio appearances. Michelle O'Neill was interviewed on television once and on radio seven times. Dr. Conor Teljeur was interviewed on radio seven times. HTA team members were featured on 10 radio stations in 2023.

### RADIO STATIONS THAT FEATURED HTA PROJECTS IN 2023



In addition to traditional media coverage, HTA Directorate outputs were disseminated online using social media platforms, including LinkedIn.

**LinkedIn social media posts in 2023 on HTA evidence outputs**

- 13 posts
- 47,056 impressions
- 1,481 link clicks

Citations of peer-reviewed articles by members of the HIQA HTA Directorate demonstrate the extent to which work within the Directorate influences academic research activity internationally. In 2023, the HTA Directorate published a total of six peer-reviewed publications, which have been cited five times as of 19 February 2024.

‘Altmetric’ is a web-based metric which incorporates a wider range of online factors that can be used to measure researcher’s attention, influence and impact. Altmetric takes into account non-traditional forms of online interaction such as public policy documents, research blogs, mainstream media coverage and social network mentions. It is important to note that the Altmetric is intended to supplement rather than replace existing forms of research evaluation (that is, citation-based metrics).

**Citations and Altmetrics of HTA publications\***

Peer-reviewed publications

- Cardwell K, Clyne B, Broderick N, Tyner B, Masukume G, Larkin L, et al. *Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic in selected countries to inform strengthening of public health systems: a qualitative study*. Public Health. 2023;225:343-52. Altmetric score: 5
- Cardwell K, Quigley J, Clyne B, Tyner B, Carrigan M, Smith SM, et al. *Systematic review finds processes used internationally, to update clinical guidelines, lack consistency and detail*. Evidence & Policy. 2023;19(4):572-90. Altmetric score: 11 (In the top 25% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric)
- Chong MC, Sharp MK, Smith SM, O’Neill M, Ryan M, Lynch R, et al. *Strong recommendations from low certainty evidence: a cross-sectional analysis of a suite of national guidelines*. BMC Medical Research Methodology. 2023;23(1):68. 2 citations, Altmetric score: 2
- Clyne B, Hynes L, Kirwan C, McGeehan M, Byrne P, Killilea M, et al. *Perspectives on the production, and use, of rapid evidence in decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic: a qualitative study*. BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine. 2023;28(1):48-57. Altmetric score: 30 (In the top 25% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric)
- Dullea A, O’Sullivan L, Carrigan M, Ahern S, McGarry M, O’Brien K, Harrington P, Walsh KA, Smith SM, Ryan M. *Diagnostic accuracy of 18F Prostate Specific Membrane Antigen (PSMA) PET-CT radiotracers in staging and restaging of high-risk prostate*



*cancer patients and patients with biochemical recurrence: protocol for an overview of reviews.* HRB Open Research. 2023 Sep 20;6:57. Altmetric score: 4.

- O'Reilly S, Kathryn Carroll H, Murray D, Burke L, McCarthy T, O'Connor R, Spillane S et al. *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cancer care in Ireland – Perspectives from a COVID-19 and Cancer Working Group.* Journal of Cancer Policy. 2023;36:100414. 3 citations, Altmetric score: 32 (In the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric)

\*Citation and Altmetric score calculated as of 19 February 2024 and cover the period of 1 January 2023 - 19 February 2024.

HTA publications are uploaded to the international HTA database, INAHTA: <https://database.inahta.org/>. The international HTA database provides free access to bibliographic information about ongoing and published health technology assessments commissioned or undertaken by HTA organisations internationally. In 2023, a total of 18 HTA reports were uploaded to INAHTA.

### Views on INAHTA database

- *Health technology assessment of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (99 views)
- *A rapid health technology assessment of gene expression profiling tests for guiding the use of adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage invasive breast cancer* (68 views)
- *Interventions to improve long COVID symptoms: a systematic review* (67 views)
- *Rapid health technology assessment of continuous glucose monitoring in adults with type 1 diabetes mellitus* (41 views)
- *International review of the epidemiology of long COVID* (37 views)
- *A slot-scanning, biplanar, digital X-ray imaging system for the evaluation and monitoring of orthopaedic conditions: evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (36 views)
- *Health technology assessment of domiciliary invasive ventilation for adults with spinal cord injuries* (33 views)
- *Repatriation of paediatric haematopoietic stem cell transplant services to Ireland: a Health Technology Assessment* (30 views)
- *Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections* (25 views)
- *Lutetium oxodotreotide for the treatment of metastatic or inoperable gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumours (GEP-NETs): evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (24 views)
- *Expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox) vaccination: health technology assessment* (18 views)
- *Health technology assessment of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (15 views)
- *Methods for generic justification of new practices in ionising radiation* (15 views)
- *Analysis of public consultation surveys to inform the work of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group [protocols and report]* (13 views)

- *Ultra-hypofractionated adjuvant radiotherapy for breast cancer: evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (12 views)
- *Rapid health technology assessment of the extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme to include those aged 50 to 64 years (general population)* (11 views)
- *<sup>18</sup>F-prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) PET/CT imaging for the staging of high-risk or recurrent prostate cancer: Evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (8 views)
- *An overview of national approaches to stockpiling of medical countermeasures for public health emergencies* (7 views)

TRIP (Turning Research into Practice) database [www.tripdatabase.com](http://www.tripdatabase.com) is a clinical search engine that helps users quickly and easily identify high quality research evidence. TRIP database now includes HIQA publications and provides links to the HIQA website, which makes our content more discoverable.

HTA publications and peer-reviewed open-access publications authored by HTA team members are published on Lenus, the Irish health research repository: <https://www.lenus.ie/>. HIQA has a collection on the Lenus repository that collates HIQA's openly available research output. In 2023, 12 HTA reports were added to Lenus. The table below presents the total number of downloads and views for HIQA's HTA reports published in 2023.

#### Top downloads and views in Lenus 2023 of HTA publications

- *Interventions to improve Long COVID symptoms: A systematic review* (97 views, 140 downloads)
- *Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections* (60 views, 56 downloads)
- *Expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox) vaccination: Health Technology Assessment* (54 views, 77 downloads)
- *Rapid Health Technology Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Adults with Type I Diabetes Mellitus* (53 views, 94 downloads)
- *COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis: Protocol for an international review of the epidemiology of long COVID* (50 views, 11 downloads)
- *Health technology assessment of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (49 views, 15 downloads)
- *A slot-scanning, biplanar, digital X-ray imaging system for the evaluation and monitoring of orthopaedic conditions* (48 views, 142 downloads)
- *Ultra-hypofractionated adjuvant radiotherapy for breast cancer: evidence synthesis to support a generic justification decision* (46 views, 9 downloads)
- *Health Technology Assessment of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme* (41 views, 33 downloads)

- *An overview of national approaches to stockpiling of medical countermeasures for public health emergencies* (40 views, 14 downloads)
- *Lutetium oxodotreotide for the treatment of metastatic or inoperable gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumours (GEP-NETs)* (40 views, 38 downloads)
- *International review of the epidemiology of long COVID* (24 views, 2 downloads)

HIQA has a research community on Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/communities/hiqa-repository/>. In 2023, 10 search strategies were uploaded to the HIQA community.

### Views and downloads on Zenodo

- *Search strategies for overview of multiplex antigen near-patient testing for acute respiratory infections* (86 views, 3 downloads)
- *Search Strategies for Lutetium and GEP-NETs* (69 views, 18 downloads)
- *Search strategies for herpes zoster vaccination for adults* (66 views, 9 downloads)
- *Search strategies for generic justification for a slot scanning, biplanar X-ray imaging system (EOS™ imaging system) for the diagnosis and assessment of orthopaedic conditions* (60 views, 34 downloads)
- *Search strategies for generic justification of 18F-PSMA PET/CT in the staging of primary prostate cancer and the restaging of recurrent and metastatic prostate cancer* (40 views, 25 downloads)
- *Search strategies for screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) in men: a health technology assessment* (38 views, 9 downloads)
- *Search strategies for 177 lu-PSMA in the treatment of metastatic castrate-resistant prostate cancer* (23 views, 12 downloads)
- *Search strategies for new born screening for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)* (12 views, 12 downloads)
- *Search strategies for herpes zoster vaccination for adults: review of economic modelling studies* (11 views, 9 downloads)
- *Search strategies for universal vaccination with an enhanced inactivated influenza vaccine in those aged 65 years and older* (5 views, 4 downloads)

### Vignette 3

The Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland (RAMI) is a forum for the exchange of scientific information and promoting academic discussion. RAMI has over twenty sections from Biomedical Sciences, Bioengineering, Surgery, Odontology and Epidemiology & Public Health Medicine.

The RAMI Research Awards are open to all those involved in Irish medical research who have had a clinical research paper published in an indexed journal. Two academic publications from HIQA HTA Directorate were shortlisted for the RAMI Research Awards

2022, which took place in the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland on 25 September 2023. The publications shortlisted were:

- *Cost effectiveness of metabolic surgery for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and obesity: A systematic review of economic evaluations* - Public Health Medicine/Epidemiology category
- *Clinical efficacy and effectiveness of alternative varicella vaccination strategies: an overview of reviews* - Public Health Medicine/Epidemiology category

Being shortlisted for prestigious national research awards spotlights the research conducted by the HIQA HTA Directorate. This success highlights the quality of research to a broader academic audience which elevates the profile of the HTA Directorate to external stakeholders and the wider public.

Image 7: Karen Jordan, Senior HTA Analyst, (second from right) and Paul Carty (right) with fellow nominees at the RAMI Research Awards 2022



## 4. Engagement

Distinct from reach, engagement captures direct interaction with stakeholders or the general public. The HIQA HTA Directorate interacts with stakeholders through their participation in HIQA projects, in which case the stakeholders have the opportunity to directly influence HIQA outputs. In 2023, the HTA Directorate had 17 Expert Advisory Groups (EAGs) which included 285 members from 48 organisations in 15 meetings.

### Advisory groups

- COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis EAG
- EAG for Evidence review of universal ultrasound screening for developmental dysplasia of the hip in infants in Ireland
- EAG for HTA for expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox) vaccination
- EAG for HTA of Domiciliary Invasive Ventilation for Adults with Spinal Cord Injuries
- EAG for HTA of Repatriation of paediatric haematopoietic stem cell transplant services to Ireland
- EAG for HTA of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme
- EAG for HTA of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme
- EAG for Herpes Zoster (shingles) vaccination HTA
- EAG for HTA of universal vaccination with an enhanced inactivated influenza vaccine in those aged 65 years and older
- EAG for Overview of multiplex antigen near-patient tests for acute respiratory infections
- EAG for Rapid HTA of Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus
- EAG for Rapid HTA of gene expression profiling tests for guiding the use of adjuvant chemotherapy in early-stage invasive breast cancer
- EAG for Rapid HTA of the extension of the seasonal influenza vaccination programme to include those aged 50 to 64 years (general population)
- EAG for Review of national public health strategies in selected countries
- EAG for Review of national rare disease strategies in selected countries
- Medical Exposure to Ionising Radiation EAG
- Prioritisation Advisory Group

Through participation of members of the HIQA HTA Directorate in external projects, committees and groups, we influence the outputs of other organisations and agencies.

### Participation in prioritisation and appraisal of National Clinical Guidelines and National Clinical Audits

- Participated in the prioritisation committee for potential guideline on Obesity in Adults

### National Clinical Effectiveness Committee and National Clinical Guideline Development Groups supported

#### National Clinical Effectiveness Committee

- Advances in the development of clinical practice guidance: A scoping review*

#### Guideline Development Groups

- Infection Prevention Control National Clinical Guideline*
- Update to the National Clinical Guideline Management of an Acute Asthma Attack in Adults (aged 16 years and older)*
- National Clinical Guideline for Obesity in Adults*

### Contribution to external working groups and committees

- National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC)
- COVID-19 Advisory Group
- Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group
- National Cancer Control Programme Technology Review Committee
- HRB-CICER Executive Committee
- HSE Rare Diseases Medicinal Products Technology Review Committee
- HSE Education Working Group for the Implementation of National Clinical Guideline No. 21
- Department of Health's Health System Performance Assessment Stakeholder Group
- Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) Steering Group
- Evidence Synthesis Ireland International Advisory Board
- Heads of HTA Agencies Group
- EC Committee on HTA
- ISPOR HTA Roundtable
- Long COVID Ireland Study Steering Committee
- UK National Screening Committee Blood Spot Task Group
- Advisory Group for Irish Cancer Society funded project entitled '*Examining the impact of COVID-19 on cancer in Ireland*'
- EU Member State Coordination Group on HTA
- Development of Methodological and Procedural Guidance subgroup of the EU Member State Coordination Group on HTA

- Joint Clinical Assessments (JCA) subgroup of the EU Member State Coordination Group on HTA
- GINAHTA (Guidelines International Network - International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment) Steering Committee

### Public consultations conducted

- *HTA of expansion of the childhood immunisation schedule to include varicella (chickenpox)*

### Collaborations

- Partnership with the Department of Public Health in the Mid-West to successfully apply to co-host a Clinical Leadership in Public Health Medicine fellow funded by HSE from July 2023 to July 2024.
- Collaboration with the Health Library Ireland (formerly the HSE National Health Library and Knowledge Service). HSE librarians provided technical support to HIQA's evidence synthesis team throughout 2023.
- HIQA is a member of both HTAi and the International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment (INAHTA). These international collaborations allow the HTA Directorate to share research and collaborate on and co-produce evidence reviews on health technologies.
- HIQA is a founding member of the Heads of HTA Agencies Group, a network of Health Technology Assessment Agencies across the European Union formed in 2021.
- HIQA is a designated member of the Coordination Group on HTA (HTACG) for medical devices. The key tasks of the HTACG are to coordinate and adopt the joint HTA work carried out by its sub-groups within the scope of the HTA Regulation and to adopt methodological and procedural guidance documents for joint work.
- A member of the HTA Senior Management Team was invited and has joined the GINAHTA Steering Committee, which explores common methods and facilitates collaboration and sharing of products between the HTA (represented by INAHTA) and the guideline communities (represented by G-I-N).
- HIQA is a co-applicant on the Health Research Board Emerging Investigator Award (EIA) led by Dr Barbara Clyne, RCSI, entitled *Evidence synthesis and translation of findings for national clinical guideline development: addressing the needs and preferences of guideline development groups*. This research aims to support clinical guideline development processes underlying the work conducted by HRB-CICER by developing a 'toolkit' for evidence producers and end users.
- HIQA is a co-applicant on the Health Research Board Applied Partnership Award (APA) led by Dr Barbara Clyne, RCSI, entitled *Rapid Health Technology Assessments (rHTA) in Ireland: when do we need them?* This research aims to elaborate the definition and

role of rapid HTAs in the context of informing national level policy, health service decisions and international practice.

- HIQA is a co-applicant on the Health Research Board Applying Research into Policy and Practice Award (ARPP) led by Dr Melissa Sharpe-Crowe, RCSI, entitled *Optimising the Dissemination of Health Research in Ireland*. This research aims to explore the media coverage of health research in Ireland and the current communication and collaboration between researchers, communications specialists and journalists with the aim of improving connections between these groups and identifying training needs for early-career researchers.
- HIQA is a co-applicant on a European Commission Strategic Agenda for Medical Ionising Radiation Applications (SAMIRA) preparatory Joint Action. Known as the PriSMA project, the preparatory Joint Action involves collaboration with 18 other Competent Authorities to support and sustain implementation of developments in the area of quality and safety issues concerning medical applications of ionising radiation across all EU Member States.
- HIQA signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between national HTA bodies in Scotland, Wales and Ireland in 2019. Since the signing of this MoU, HIQA has worked closely with its counterparts in Scotland (Scottish Health Technologies Group) and Wales (Health Technology Wales) on various HTAs and other projects of mutual benefit.
- A member of the HTA Senior Management team is a member of the first cohort of Young Academy Ireland, a new interdisciplinary organisation of early career researchers and innovators which brings together individuals who work collaboratively for the benefit of society.

#### Vignette 4

In September 2020, HIQA commenced providing evidence-based advice directly to the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) on behalf of the Minister for Health. To inform the development of the advice to NPHE, a COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group (EAG) comprising nominated representatives from the relevant clinical and public health stakeholder groups, patient representation and methodological expertise was established.

The HIQA COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis Team provided reports to the COVID-19 EAG from 2020 to 2023, including a systematic review of [interventions to improve Long COVID symptoms](#) published on 27 July 2023. The report was positively received by members of the COVID-19 EAG who provided the following feedback:

"Huge amount of work was put into it by those who worked on it and it was well written. Please extend my thanks to all who worked on this. Really impressive job."

"This really is a great report and very helpful to further work on this."

"It's well-written and a comprehensive overview of the RCT evidence to date."



This feedback demonstrates the high degree of satisfaction with the work of the HIQA COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis Team and the appreciation amongst EAG members for the effort involved in producing such reports.

Additional expertise was sought on the project in key areas, including public and patient representation from Long Covid Advocacy Ireland, who joined the COVID-19 EAG as ad hoc EAG members for this project and the [International review of the epidemiology of long COVID](#). Inclusion of the patient voice in the COVID-19 EAG contributed greatly to the report in what is an emerging area of research. In response to publication of the report, Long Covid Advocacy Ireland released a press release which noted:

"LCAI actively participated in this review as part of the Patient & Public Involvement (PPI) process, and we appreciate the opportunity to be a voice for patients."

"LCAI agrees with HIQA's emphasis on the potential risks associated with seeking unproven treatments for Long Covid."

"LCAI would like to extend thanks to HIQA for the opportunity to contribute to the review process and for accommodating the involvement of patient representatives despite their own limitations due to Long Covid symptoms."

The feedback in Long Covid Advocacy Ireland's press release highlights the importance of PPI representation in work conducted by the HIQA COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis Team and the degree to which the team supported involvement by PPI representatives in the completion of the report.

## Vignette 5

Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) is a rare, genetic neuromuscular disorder. Clinically, there are five subtypes of SMA, distinguished by disease severity, with more severe forms typically presenting in infancy and early childhood, and milder forms presenting in later life.

In response to the 2021 Call for Submissions to the NSAC, a proposal was submitted to consider the introduction of screening for SMA as part of the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme. This proposal was subsequently prioritised by NSAC and a request was submitted to HIQA on 21 December 2022 to undertake a HTA on this topic.

Following approval by the HIQA Board, the HTA was presented to the NSAC and discussed at their meeting on 20 October 2023. The recommendation of the NSAC, based on the evidence outlined within the HTA, resulted in a decision by the Minister for Health in November 2023 to introduce screening for SMA in Ireland. The HTA was [published](#) on 27 November 2023.

Members of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) commented:

"The team did an excellent job and I was extremely impressed by the speed and quality of the work."

"Thank you for your continued work on these important topics. Your professionalism and detail orientation are very much appreciated."

"The HIQA team were very knowledgeable and professional, and did an excellent job of assimilating huge amounts of published data into the draft reports."

SMA Ireland, a voluntary organisation dedicated to raising awareness of SMA in Ireland, and who were part of the HTA EAG and provided the patient and public perspective on the HTA noted:

"As someone who had the privilege of serving on the expert advisory group for the HTA, I wish to express my deepest appreciation for exceptional work done by the entire HIQA team. The professionalism, dedication, and commitment displayed by HIQA throughout this process was truly outstanding."

"I recently had the honour of speaking directly with the Minister regarding the approval of SMA for the heel prick test. During this conversation, I particularly singled out the performance of the HIQA team as exemplary, not only in the depth and quality of your work, but also in the speed with which you conducted the assessment. Your thorough and diligent approach has been instrumental in moving this important initiative forward."

This demonstrates the impact of work conducted by HIQA on policy and practice. The involvement of the patient voice in HTA work is incredibly important and this vignette highlights the significance of such engagement.

## 5. Change

Change is intended to measure the informing of decision-making and health system benefits, including report advice followed; adoption of published guidelines; or skills and training of HTA Directorate staff.

### **Medium-term**

#### **Documented HTA informed decision-making**

- *Health Technology Assessment of the addition of severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme*
- *Health technology assessment of the addition of spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme*
- *Rapid Health Technology Assessment of Continuous Glucose Monitoring in Adults with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus*

#### **Evidence informed decision-making**

- National Screening Advisory Committee

#### **Skills and knowledge gained through conference, course or training attendance**

- PRINCE 2 Project Management (4 staff members)
- Introduction to R, RStudio and litsearch (1 staff member)
- Identifying Economic Evidence for HTA Training Course (1 staff member)
- Freedom of Information Decision maker (1 staff member)
- ISO Auditor training (3 staff members)
- Fundamentals of Project Management in Government (1 staff member)
- Department of Health, Conference Evidence for Reform: Where Research meets Policy (5 staff members)
- Research on cancer screening in Ireland conference, Health Behaviour Change Research Group, University of Galway (2 staff members)
- Health Science Libraries Group Annual Conference (1 staff member)
- Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland 14th Annual Scientific Meeting (1 staff member)
- European Association for Health Information and Libraries Conference, Norway (1 staff member)
- HSE Activity Based Funding Conference (1 staff member)
- Cork University Business School Postgraduate Research Symposium (1 staff member)
- University College Cork, Safe Patient Care Conference 2023 (1 staff member)
- ISPOR (The Professional Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research) Europe 2023 Conference, Copenhagen (6 staff members)

- International Network of Agencies for Health Technology Assessment (INAHTA) Conference, Australia (1 staff member, virtual attendance)
- 16th European Public Health Conference, Ireland (4 staff members)
- Department of Health Evidence for Policy Conference (1 staff member)
- European Radiation Protection Week events (2 staff members)
- National Patient Safety Office Conference (7 staff members)
- Health Research Board and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees National Conference on Research Ethics (1 staff member)
- HSE Patient and Public Partnership Conference (1 staff member)
- Structured Population health, Policy and Health-services Research Education (SPHeRE) conference (9 staff members)
- Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists Conference (1 staff member)
- Guideline International Network Conference, Glasgow (4 staff members)
- Health Research Board National Clinical Trials Office Clinical Investigations and Performance Studies In Ireland under the MDR and IVDR workshop (1 staff member)
- All-Ireland Rare Disease Interdisciplinary Research Network (RAiN) international symposium (2 staff members)

Image 8: Members of the HTA Directorate with HIQA CEO Angela Fitzgerald in attendance at the SPHeRE Network 9th Annual Conference

Left to right: Barrie Tyner, Karen Jordan, Kieran Walsh, Mairin Ryan, Angela Fitzgerald, Susan Ahern, Joan Quigley, Dana Swanton, Andrew Dullea, Shibu Shrestha



### Vignette 6

The Strategy, support and research (SSR) function was established in May 2023 to provide cross-function support to the HTA Directorate in the areas of research,

programme management, administration, library, corporate reporting and risk management.

The SSR function has led on key activities in the HTA Directorate in 2023 including the ISO Audit, the [2022 HTA Directorate Knowledge Sharing and Impact Assessment](#) report, risk management approach update, HTA quality assurance framework update, planning the update of national HTA guidelines, and submission of external research grants.

Examples of other activities undertaken by the SSR Function during 2023 are outlined below:

- Ongoing provision of HTA programme management, administration and library services.
- Overseeing the Evidence Synthesis Strategy 2020-2024, leading on implementation of 2023 actions and preparing for delivery of 2024 actions.
- Presentation of the HTA Directorate risk report to the Audit, Risk, Governance and Compliance (ARGC) committee.
- Supporting the dissemination and administration of current grants in the HTA Directorate, such as the HRB-CICER award.
- Managing the HTA Buddy system for new joiners and also updating the HTA Induction programme.
- Coordinating student placements, fellowships and internships, including one pharmacy student placement, one Evidence Synthesis Ireland (ESI) fellowship, two MSc Health Economics internships and one ASPIRE Public Health fellowship.
- Coordinating several learning and support initiatives, including the Academic Publications Working Group, the establishment of Troubleshooting and Innovations workshops, PhD Troubleshooting workshops, Lunch and Learn sessions.
- Delivery of library support and training.
- Submission of HTA outputs to online repositories.
- Establishing an Open Access funding mechanism.
- Maintenance of the HIQA library homepage on the intranet.
- Managing contracts.
- Facilitating recruitment and retention, as well as internal PhD opportunities.
- Developing and updating various policies and procedures
- Supporting the expansion and reorganisation of the HTA Directorate.
- Coordinating the HTA Directorate's transition to Sharepoint Online.
- Contributing to the ISO Audit process.

### Vignette 7

On 2 February 2023, HIQA commenced generic justification of new practices involving medical exposure to ionising radiation (MEIR). HIQA convened a MEIR Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to support it in its role as the competent authority. Members of the EAG include representatives of patient organisations, regulatory authorities and key professional bodies.

On 2 February 2023, HIQA also published a methods document which sets out how HIQA carries out the generic justification of practices and which provides guidance to applicants seeking generic justification. Since publishing this document and launching this new function, HIQA has considered four new practices for generic justification. A decision is taken following consideration of the application, the evidence review, and the recommendation from the MEIR EAG in relation to the balance between the benefits and harms of the practice.

The work of the Ionising Radiation function has received feedback from the members of the MEIR EAG who commented:

"I find the work done by the team on the evidence synthesis is incredible, so do pass on my compliments. Really well done and makes the reviewing a lot easier."

"I thought the meeting yesterday was very good. In particular, the assembling of the research and presentation on the subject was excellent."

"Very comprehensive and very well written report."

"Very high level of rigour applied to your assessment of the data, which is really good to see."

Applicants also provided their feedback on their involvement in the generic justification process:

"Thank you for passing on the decision letter and the final evidence synthesis report on this piece, we greatly appreciate all of the work conducted by you and your colleagues in this matter. You made it a very engaging and worthwhile process for us and we look forward to working together in the future."

"The report was very comprehensive and most impressive."

The ionising radiation evidence review team presented their work and highlighted the newly established function via an online webinar, at the national Radiation Safety Study Day, and to visiting fellows from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2023.

Attendees commented:

"Really enjoyed the talk, found it very informative, especially the Q&A section."

"The programme that you put together and the expertise that you gathered provided an invaluable opportunity for them (visiting fellows). They were very appreciative of it."

## Vignette 8

The Public Health function was established in 2023 to conduct evidence syntheses and provide evidence-based advice to inform national strategic decision-making, at the request of the Department of Health.

Work conducted by the Public Health function informed the [Report of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group](#) published on 6 September 2023. A key recommendation from this report was the development of a national public health strategy in Ireland.

To support this recommendation, the Public Health team reviewed national public health strategies in 15 selected countries, which was published on 24 October 2023. The review provided a description of how these countries develop national public health strategies, along with an understanding of the health issues of importance to them and how these may be improved upon.

An external stakeholder in the Department of Health noted:

“This piece of work should inform a far more considered approach to mobilisation and engagement with key stakeholders. Couldn’t have asked for more in relation to the outputs – exceeded my expectations. To get that breadth of insight regarding other public health strategies’ aims, objectives, governance structures, approaches to work – this has really brought me up to speed at a personal level. Now need to leverage it in the context of what we’re doing next.”

Building on the contributions to the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group, the review of national public health strategies in selected countries informed two workshops in 2023. Members of the Public Health function attended both workshops and presented an overview of the report.

The first workshop was held on 6 November 2023 by the Department of Health, involving key stakeholders from the Department of Health including the Chief Medical Officer.

The second workshop was held on 13 November 2023 with representatives from the Health Service Executive, Department of Health, World Health Organization and members of the Public Health Reform Expert Advisory Group.

This demonstrates the impact of the work of HIQA on national public health policy and the reach of outputs to national and international stakeholders.

## Vignette 9

Following a request from the HSE, HIQA agreed to undertake a rapid HTA of continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) for adults with type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM). The aim of this

rapid HTA was to provide advice on the clinical effectiveness, cost effectiveness, and budget impact of providing CGM for adults with T1DM.

At the time of conducting the rapid HTA, the HSE reimbursed several CGM systems, but access rules differed by system and the age of the individual, with access to some CGM systems determined at a local level and potentially limited by local health area budget.

HSE expenditure on CGM had grown significantly over a short period of time. In its rapid HTA, HIQA found that there is some evidence to suggest that CGM improves glycaemic outcomes compared with self-monitoring, but that there is limited head-to-head evidence to distinguish between different types of CGM systems. HIQA advised the HSE to consider the use of a single national managed access programme for all CGM systems for all individuals with T1DM regardless of age. The [rapid HTA](#) was published on 29 September 2023.

Members of the Expert Advisory Group commented:

"Well done on this excellent HTA deliverable. I enjoyed working with you and all the interdisciplinary committee, it was a very collaborative process."

"It will be very helpful to us in the HSE-MMP (Medicines Management Programme)."

Informed directly by the findings of the rapid HTA, the HSE has implemented a new reimbursement application system for all CGM sensors, with effect from 1 December 2023. From this date, all patients newly initiated on CGM sensors must receive prior approval for reimbursement support. The implementation of the reimbursement application system was signalled by the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service in a circular on 25 October 2023 which noted:

"In line with the advice from HIQA and due to the budget impact associated with CGM sensors, the HSE will establish a single managed access programme for all CGM systems for all individuals with Type I Diabetes Mellitus regardless of age. This online reimbursement application system will replace the current managed access system in place for FreeStyle Libre 1 and will apply to all CGM sensors on the Reimbursement List."

The HSE-MMP also announced a roadmap for the identification of preferred continuous glucose monitoring sensor(s) with associated system(s) in November 2023 which highlights a number of recommendations and advice points from the HIQA report. The roadmap included a public consultation period in November-December 2023 where submissions were invited from all relevant stakeholders.

This example demonstrates the immediate impact HIQA HTA outputs can have on policy and practice.



## 6. Conclusion

The HTA Directorate has gone through significant expansion and re-organisation since 2020. The impact of our work in 2023 is a culmination of efforts by both the existing work streams and the newly established work streams, namely the Ionising Radiation function; the Immunisation team; and the Strategy, Support and Research team. As the work programme of the HTA Directorate transitioned from the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 and 2021, the types of projects conducted were more reflective of traditional HTA outputs which include multiple domains and extensive analysis. This is denoted by the lower absolute number of outputs from the HTA Directorate in 2023.

The full resumption of in-person national and international conferences in 2023 presented an excellent opportunity to disseminate HTA outputs to wider audiences and led to an increase in the number of presentations delivered in 2023. Through engagement with international activities, the HTA Directorate is well positioned to contribute to planning for the implementation of the European Union Regulation on HTA (HTAR).

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*The broad range of activities undertaken by the HTA Directorate continue to have a substantial impact and influence both nationally and internationally.*

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Evaluation of the impact of our work is an essential component in understanding the extent to which it informs decision making and also its visibility to the general public. Dissemination of our work and making it subject to independent peer review provides reassurance of its quality and that it is carried out in accordance with international best practice. The Knowledge Sharing and Impact Assessment Report for 2023 demonstrates that the broad range of activities undertaken by the HTA Directorate continue to have a substantial impact and influence both nationally and internationally.

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