

OUTCOMES RESEARCH AND APPROPRIATENESS OF MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES*

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Abstract

As health expenditures continue to consume increasingly large proportions of national budgets, ways must be found to assure that resources spent on health are used for effective services. Since only a small proportion of medical decisions are based on scientific evidence about their outcomes, it is not surprising that wide variations exist in clinical practice. In recent years, questions have been raised about how medical decisions are made and the proportion of medical procedures that are performed for appropriate reasons.

One method developed to quantify the amount of inappropriate use is the so-called "RAND appropriateness method," which is based on the scientific evidence and the collective judgment of an expert panel. Measured by this method, a number of procedures have been shown to have high rates of inappropriate or uncertain use.

The challenge is to find ways to eliminate ineffective services to free resources for those that have been proven effective. Further research is needed to improve the method and to find acceptable ways its findings can be used to promote effective care.

* Lázaro P. Outcomes research and appropriateness of medical technologies. In: *The place of outcomes research in health technology assessment*. Barcelona: International Society for Technology Assessment in Health Care;1997:147-56.

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