

# HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS BULLETIN



## Welcome Message

**From  
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- **Director of Health Technology Assessment**

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**Welcome to our first bulletin of 2024, covering HIQA's activities from January through March in the area of health technology assessment (HTA) and evidence synthesis.** It aims to give readers a quick overview of the work our HTA Directorate has completed, conferences we have attended, and academic articles we have published. Links are included for further reading. All of our publications are available to read in full on our website, [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

In recent weeks, we were pleased to note that the Minister for Health approved introduction of the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine into the Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme, subject to funding being made available. This announcement follows our publication last year of a HTA that concluded there was clear and consistent evidence that the chickenpox vaccine is both safe and effective, and that it would be a cost-effective addition to the national childhood immunisation programme.

In this issue, we include our publications from the first quarter of the year. Particularly noteworthy is the publication of our draft HTA for public consultation on the addition of herpes zoster (shingles) vaccination to the adult vaccination programme. If you would like to give your feedback on the draft report, visit [HIQA.ie](http://HIQA.ie) and complete our survey by **30 April**.

In the coming months, we will be working on a public consultation on a draft HTA on the use of enhanced inactivated influenza (flu) vaccines in those aged 65 years and older, as part of the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme; continuing our work to justify practices involving medical exposure to ionising radiation; and working on a range of other HTA and evidence synthesis topics.

We hope you find this bulletin useful, and we welcome your thoughts on what you would like to read in future editions. Reach out to us at [htanews@hiqa.ie](mailto:htanews@hiqa.ie).

# ABOUT HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

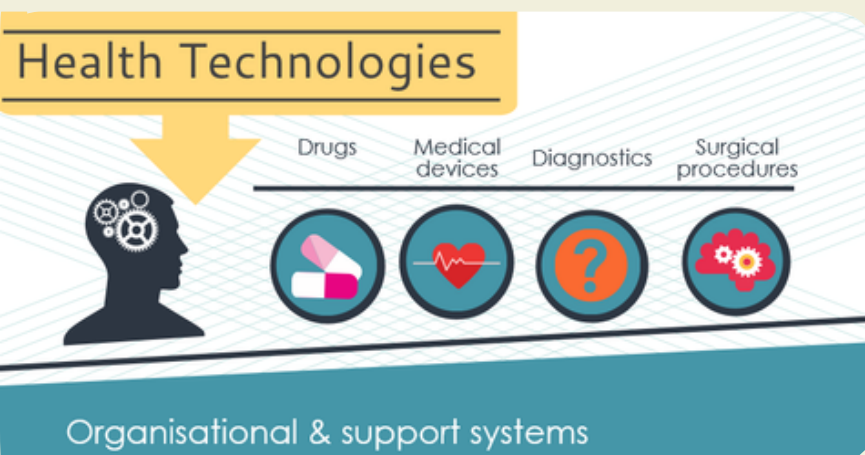
## WHAT IS HTA?

HTA is a **multidisciplinary research process** that **collects and summarises information** about a health technology.

The information can cover a range of fields, including:

- ☆ clinical effectiveness and safety,
- ☆ cost effectiveness and safety,
- ☆ burden of disease,
- ☆ organisational and social aspects,
- ☆ ethical and legal issues.

The information is collected and presented in a **systematic, transparent, unbiased and robust manner**.



A Guide to  
**Health Technology Assessment**  
at HIQA

For more details, read our [Guide to Health Technology Assessment at HIQA](#)

## HTA AT HIQA

Our work in health technology assessment is important in **informing decisions on the best use of resources to achieve the best outcomes for people who use our health service.**

# HTA UPDATES



## PUBLIC CONSULTATION LAUNCHED ON SHINGLES VACCINATION

We have published our draft HTA for public consultation of the addition of herpes zoster (shingles) vaccination to the adult vaccination programme. Following the public consultation, the report will be finalised and submitted as advice to the Minister for Health, and published on the HIQA website.

- The draft report, an online survey and details of how to take part in the consultation are available [here](#). The deadline for submissions is **5pm on 30 April 2024**.

## HTA ON ENHANCED FLU VACCINES FOR THOSE AGED 65 YEARS AND OLDER

We have commenced work on a HTA on the use of enhanced inactivated influenza (flu) vaccines in those aged 65 years and older, as part of the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme. In January, we published the protocol for this HTA which outlines the approach we are using to complete this assessment, and explains the areas the assessment will focus on, such as clinical and cost effectiveness and the methods we will use.

- We plan to publish the draft HTA for public consultation in the coming months. You can find out more and read the protocol [here](#).



## HTA OF BIRTH COHORT TESTING FOR HEPATITIS C

In February, we updated our advice to the Minister for Health on Hepatitis C virus (HCV) screening. Studies since our original assessment suggest the prevalence of undiagnosed HCV infection is declining nationally much more than had been expected, possibly due to successful HCV treatment provided by the HSE's national treatment programme.

- You can read the full assessment [here](#).

# OTHER PUBLICATIONS

## ADVANCES IN CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE



In January, we published a review of advances in the development and implementation of clinical practice guidance. This was carried out as part of HIQA's HRB-CICER function, which independently reviews evidence and provides scientific support to the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) and the development of national clinical guidelines.

- We found that the NCEC's current standards for clinical practice guidance remain relevant and appropriate. We also identified innovations which could improve these standards, such as further emphasis on health equity in developing clinical practice guidance.
- Read the full review [here](#).

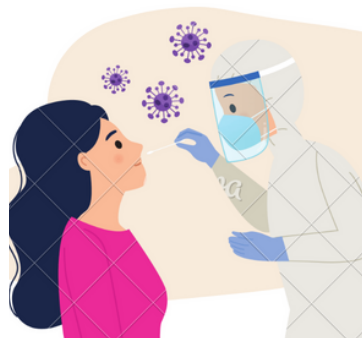
## RARE DISEASE STRATEGY REVIEW

A national rare disease strategy aims to reduce the burden of rare diseases and improve the quality of care for people with rare diseases. Last year, the Minister for Health committed to developing a new National Rare Disease Plan. This was followed by the establishment of Ireland's National Rare Disease Steering Group, tasked with developing this new plan.

- At the request of the Department of Health, we carried out a review of national rare disease strategies in selected countries. We published the review in February, which will inform the work of the Steering Group. You can read the full review [here](#).



## COVID-19 PROTECTIVE IMMUNITY RAPID REVIEW



The March 2024 issue of Reviews in Medical Virology includes [our article](#) titled "Duration of protective immunity following COVID-19 vaccination of individuals with underlying health conditions: A rapid review". We examined the change in efficacy and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination over time in individuals with underlying conditions.

- While the evidence supports providing additional doses to those who are immunocompromised and boosters to those with underlying health conditions, further research is required to understand the impact of new variants on vaccine efficacy and or effectiveness in this population.



# OTHER NEWS



L-R: Janssen's Brita O'Reilly, University of Galway's Professor Brendan Kennelly, HIQA's Orla Jenkins

## Orla Jenkins awarded Janssen Bursary Medal

In February, **Orla Jenkins**, our HTA Analyst, was awarded the Janssen Bursary Medal in recognition of academic excellence in health economics in 2023.

Orla earned a Master of Science (MSc) in Health Economics from the University of Galway. She also holds an MSc in Hand Therapy from University of Derby and a BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy from UCD. While completing her MSc at the University of Galway, Orla completed a career placement with HIQA and joined us as a HTA analyst thereafter.

## Medical exposure to ionising radiation

**1** February marked year

...since we began our patient safety role justifying practices involving medical exposure to ionising radiation.



Some of our HTA Team and HIQA colleagues with our guests from the International Atomic Energy Agency and Irish Medical Physics Services at a presentation on HIQA's establishment of national DRLs and generic justification of practices in August 2023

Since, we have justified

**4** new ionising radiation practices...

- ✦ a treatment for gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine cancer,
- ✦ short courses of radiotherapy for breast cancer,
- ✦ a novel PET-CT scan for prostate cancer,
- ✦ a new system for imaging orthopaedic conditions.

In **2024** we will be...

- ✦ reviewing a new therapy for metastatic prostate cancer,
- ✦ working on guidelines for the safe use of medical radiological procedures, which are carried out on asymptomatic individuals and outside of the context of a screening program.

Find out more about our role in medical exposure to ionising radiation [here](#).

# SPHeRE Network 10th Annual Conference

 SPHeRE: Structured Population Health, Policy and Health-services Research Education

A number of our team members presented posters and or gave talks on our work at the 10th annual conference of the SPHeRE Network held in Dublin on 29 February.

This included a wide range of topics, such as chickenpox vaccination, diabetes monitoring, shingles vaccination, flu vaccination, Long COVID management, acute respiratory infections testing, public health strategies, clinical practice guidelines standards, and healthcare regionalisation and patient-centred care.

The conference agenda can be found [here](#), while all posters can be found [here](#).



Some of the team at the HIQA stand



Andrew Dullea



Shibu Shrestha



Dr Emma Reece



Aoife Bergin



Joan Quigley



Orla Jenkins



David Byrne



Dr Michelle Norris