



Press Release

5 Leading Agencies Joins Forces to Promote Early Health Technology Assessment for Development of Medical and Healthcare Innovations in Thailand

On June 19, 2023, the Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program Foundation (HITAP Foundation), in collaboration with the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health of the National University of Singapore (NUS), organized a workshop on “Fruitful Research: How to Make Health Innovation Worthwhile”. Together with partner agencies, including the Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI), the Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences (Public Organization) or TCELS, and the National Health Security Office (NHSO), they also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on “Collaboration on Priority Setting and Early Health Technology Assessment of Health Innovations in Thailand”. The events, held at The Sukosol Hotel Bangkok, were attended by medical professionals, researchers and innovation developers from the public and private sectors.

In the workshop on “Fruitful Research: How to Make Health Innovation Worthwhile”, Dr. Yot Teerawattananon, Secretary General of the HITAP Foundation, and Dr. Wang Yi, Assistant Professor at Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, shared their knowledge and experience about “early Health Technology Assessment” or early HTA, covering the topics such as, what makes a health innovation “desirable” and “marketable”, and how to know if it is worth investing in research and development of a certain health innovation.

According to Dr. Yot, early HTA is a novel field of research which is not broadly known yet, but when health innovators get to know and understand its concept, more than half of them would find it interesting and view early HTA as highly beneficial for health innovation development. This is because early HTA can provide information and guidance since the research and development phase on how well an innovation must perform and in which aspects to meet the



needs of the market or health insurance schemes. This information can tangibly enhance the success rate of innovation development.

“Thailand has yet to achieve the desired level of success in medical innovation as it should. Many innovations developed in the country have not been effectively commercialized and registered in the market. This can be attributed to several factors, and one important factor is the lack of the evaluation of prospective innovation in its research and development phase. This is termed “early Health Technology Assessment” or early HTA and is a process that assesses the prospective impacts that may arise from the use of technology in healthcare or daily life of the population, considering the characteristics and properties of different technological formats.

This evaluation allows investors and innovators to understand the target characteristics or properties that need to be developed for the technology to be in high demand in the market. The World Health Organization (WHO) has employed this mechanism to help health innovations to meet the needs of the global health system. For example, it sets the target characteristics of screening tools, drugs, and vaccines for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) since the early stages of the pandemic. This has facilitated the development and subsequent approval of these innovations by regulatory bodies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), or similar organizations worldwide. It has enabled the control and reduction of global pandemic losses in a faster and more efficient manner than ever before.

As one of the experts of the World Health Organization involved in defining the characteristics of the COVID-19 vaccine since April 2020, before it was available in the market in early 2021, I have witnessed the benefits of working in such a manner. Therefore, I would like to apply this approach to support the development of medical innovations in Thailand,” said Dr. Yot

Recognizing the importance of early HTA, the HITAP Foundation and the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health of the NUS, therefore, have joined forces with TSRI, TCELS, and NHSO, which are Thailand’s leading organizations regarding innovation, research and evaluation of



health technology, and health policy, to initiate an official cooperation in the field of early HTA in Thailand with the MOU on “Collaboration on Priority Setting and Early Health Technology Assessment of Health Innovations in Thailand” serving as their first milestone.

At the MOU signing ceremony, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Patamawadee Pochanukul, President of the TSRI, said, “As an organization under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESRI), TSRI’s key responsibilities include promoting and fortifying the Science, Research, and Innovation (SRI) System, as well as creating bodies of knowledge, developing public policies, and fostering implementation of research findings and utilization of innovations for the benefit of the country. The goal is to contribute to the balanced and sustainable development of the nation.

Currently, the budget allocation for research and development of medical products prior to market launch is substantial. However, the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) evaluates the cost-effectiveness of health technologies after the products have been released to the market. As such, if the assessment shows unfavorable results, it means significant losses in investment. Therefore, possessing tools to assess the worthiness of technologies at the early stage of research and development would help reduce risks in research investments from both public and private sectors and increase confidence in investment decisions. On this occasion, TSRI is pleased to be part of this early HTA collaboration which will be beneficial in aiding decision-making for investments from both the public and private sectors in the future.”

Dr. Jittiporn Thammajinda, CEO of TCELS, stated, “Our mission is to accelerate innovations, build conducive ecosystems, and catalyze and connect medical and health related partners. This encompasses diagnosis, treatment, and disease prevention. Moreover, TCELS supports and promotes life sciences research and innovation and technology transfer in order to establish commercial linkages by collaborating with all sectors. We aim to push forward the life sciences industry as one of the top ten economies with equitable access.



Since TCELS plays an important role in promoting research and innovation in the medical and healthcare fields at the downstream stage, by taking research results and innovations into practical use for commercial purposes and supporting the development products and services, we recognize the importance of this collaboration on priority setting and early HTA, as it will assist TCELS in decision-making through data support and hence gaining confidence in a particular innovation or technology undergone early-stage assessment. This will be advantageous for the effective allocation of research funding in the medical and health fields.”

Dr. Athaporn Limpanyalers, Deputy Secretary-General of NHSO, said, “NHSO plays a significant role in collecting, gathering, and analyzing information about the operation of healthcare services, creating accessible healthcare services that are of high quality and standardized for the public, as well as managing funds for disbursing expenses for the provision of healthcare services to service units and service network. These efforts align with the increasing healthcare benefits provided each year.

Therefore, the early HTA to support research and development in healthcare innovation will be a crucial factor in ensuring that the current healthcare benefits are valuable and efficient. NHSO is pleased to be a part of this collaboration and will support in all related areas, including promoting the new benefits into the Universal Coverage Scheme. It is our sincere hope that all five organizations will come together and use their respective strengths to benefit Thailand and the Thai people.”

Prof. Teo Yik Ying, Dean of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health of NUS, stated, “Although healthcare megatrends are valuable opportunities for health systems, hospitals and primary care clinics, and individuals, they are also threats to sustainable and responsible health financing. This partnership is aimed exactly at sustainable and responsible financing, to determine what is effective and cost-effective, what could be cost-effective, and what would be the budgetary impact. Rising healthcare costs are a common threat worldwide, especially considering new advanced technologies. Early HTA not only provides guidance to policy makers,



but importantly to guide technology innovators, especially for scaling and for coverage under national insurance schemes.

Also, the value of partnerships between academia and policy makers helps ensure evidence guided decision making, and for academics to stay relevant. During peace time, this builds valuable trust and working models for partnership and real-world consultation, which during health crises can be tapped on. Besides, with today's fragmenting multilateralism and rising nationalism, partnership between Singapore and Thailand is even more precious, to establish alliance. Issuing a challenge to this alliance, it could extend beyond Singapore and Thailand to see how early HTA from this collaboration can guide other ASEAN countries in setting priorities and in evaluating new technologies under development.”

Assoc. Prof. Wanrudee Isaranuwatjai, Program Leader and Senior Researcher of HITAP Foundation, said, “Early HTA is a new branch of HTA research that has gained attention in many countries especially given the scarcity of resources in healthcare, the uncontrollable increase of healthcare expenditure, and the need to improve the efficiency of our healthcare system as highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. To our knowledge, there are currently only two other organizations in the world specializing in early HTA.

As an organization supporting HTA research, HITAP Foundation takes pride in being part of pioneering early HTA work in the Asia-Pacific region. We aim to strengthen the capacity for developing health innovations and enabling the practical application of innovations both in Thailand and internationally. Through the Medical Innovation Development and Assessment Support (MIDAS), which is established through the collaboration between the HITAP Foundation and NUS, as a unit which specializes in early HTA, HITAP Foundation is dedicated to support research to provide supporting information for innovators, increasing innovations' chances of success and ensuring that the people have access to new and effective innovations in an efficient and timely manner in the future.”



Bringing together the top experts in innovation, research and evaluation of health technology, and health policy from Thailand and Singapore, with their commitment and shared goal to create positive changes in the field of medical innovation and healthcare systems, the five agencies strongly believe that their joint venture will be the one towards equity, efficiency, and sustainability in a responsible and forward-looking health system.

About HITAP Foundation

The Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program Foundation (HITAP Foundation) was established in 2007 as a research organization. Its main mission is to study both positive and negative impacts arising from the use of technology or health policies and present research results and relevant information to relevant government agencies, such as the Sub-committee on Development of the Essential Drugs List, the National Health Security Office (NHSO), and various agencies under the Ministry of Public Health for use in policy decision-making.

The HITAP Foundation also works internationally, especially in developing countries, with an emphasis on supporting the development of the capacity to conduct self-assessment of health technology.