As the biotechnology revolution broadens, many expensive new products will come before P&T committee members across the country. I believe that there is much we can learn from the process of technology assessment that is relevant to our analysis of these new products. To learn more about critical success factors in this process, I recommend taking a look at the recent work from the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) and the National Association of Public Hospitals (NAPH).

The UHC, representing a consortium of 90 academic medical centers, has its headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. The NAPH, which represents several dozen major national public hospitals, is based in Washington, DC. These two critical constituent-based organizations provide research-driven member services, including publications. Strictly speaking, these services are available only to UHC and NAPH members, but I would like to take the opportunity here to summarize the key lessons that are relevant for P&T committees.

Twenty-six health care organizations that were members of the UHC or the NAPH responded to detailed surveys evaluating all aspects of the technology assessment process within their walls. Through this external benchmarking process, the UHC and NAPH identified factors that were essential to the success of technology assessment from the so-called “better-performing” organizations.

In short, what can we learn from the organizations that perform technology assessment better than their peers?

Among the most important success factors for a top-rated technology assessment program are:

1. *a systematic approach to the utilization of resources.* Organizations such as Ohio State University have implemented a consistent institution-wide process to address the appropriate use of all resources, including technological ones.

2. *dedicated resources.* The committed efforts of many people, including facilitators, analysts, clinicians, and support staff, were instrumental in performing the task.

3. *impartial facilitation.* An objective individual, namely a value analysis facilitator, must oversee the process and ensure that appropriate research is completed.

4. *a comprehensive assessment process.* A formal, efficient procedure takes the guesswork out of choosing which new technologies to implement and helps to prevent poor investments in expensive equipment.

5. *input from key stakeholders.* Individuals who are affected by decisions made by the technology assessment committee must be allowed to participate in the process to ensure balanced, equitable rulings.

Clearly, most institutions cannot implement such a comprehensive five-point plan. However, from a benchmarking perspective, it is helpful to have these criteria as a goal.

The leading institutions in the survey were also able to delineate specific advantages from an effective assessment process. For example, several organizations noted financial savings from a technology assessment and were able to avoid spending millions of dollars in unnecessary capital costs. Some participants mentioned the benefits of “standardization in which a formal assessment process [ensured] that new technologies were consistent with organizational goals and the strategic plan.” Others pointed to the ability to avoid conflicts of interest in which key stakeholders declared any potential conflicts as part of a formal technology assessment application process. Finally, most respondents agreed that an open, structured process “broke down silos and reduced political intrigue and closed-door deals.”

Although a comprehensive program might not be applicable for all P&T readers, we can learn a lot from institutions that have critically evaluated their own programs and are willing to share their successes and failures with a national audience. The UHC and NAPH are proud of their research-driven syntheses, and gaining knowledge is an obvious benefit of membership.

If you would like to learn more about the UHC project, please contact Kathy Vermoch at vermoch@uhc.edu. Tell her that David Nash sent you!

As always, you can reach me at my e-mail address: david.nash@jefferson.edu.

**REFERENCE**

1. The Use and Assessment of Technology. The University HealthSystem Consortium, Chicago, IL; 2004.