Economic Evaluation in Clinical Trials, 2nd Edition


Reviewed by Mrs Ha D.N. Le
Deakin Health Economics, Population Health SRC, Deakin University, Victoria

Among the many handbooks on health economic evaluation available, Economic Evaluation in Clinical Trials, now in its second edition, will be of interest to researchers who work in health economic fields worldwide. This well-structured and updated book provides information on the methods for conducting economic evaluations alongside clinical trials; in particular, designing economic evaluations in clinical trials, preplanning in preparation for the trials, and the transferability of the results from trials. It also provides helpful guidance on techniques for collecting cost data, analysing the data and interpreting the results, as well as the issues of using these techniques in implementing the economic evaluation. The techniques presented and their issues and potential approaches are illustrated through practical case studies and examples, which are carefully explained and discussed.

This new edition extends the strengths of the first edition in a coherent and understandable way, with important information added or clarified. Designing economic evaluations in clinical trials is updated with discussion of the instruments used for medical service data collection, for collecting work loss data and for protocol-induced cost. There is also an update of the comparison of different instruments used to calculate Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs); in particular, the inclusion of the SF-6D in comparison to the HUI2, HUI3 or EQ-5D, including a discussion of the minimum important differences of these instruments and the methods of administration. The book includes important updates on techniques and methodological issues for cost analysis in the clinical trial setting with relevant examples. However, there are sections that could be improved to make it a more comprehensive and accessible handbook to readers. For example, the perspective of the economic evaluation is not mentioned when discussing the method, ‘gold standard’ or issues of study design. Economic evaluation plays an important role in defining boundaries for collecting the resource uses in trials (What are relevant costs and benefits in the economic evaluation of the trial?); and the assessment of trial costs and benefits. Ideally, the perspective of the economic evaluation should be mentioned at the beginning of the chapter where the ‘gold standard’ is discussed, in the preplanning in preparation for the trial section, or at least briefly discussed with reference to other sources for further reading (e.g. Drummond et al.’s Methods for the economic evaluation of health care programmes). In addition, the section on instruments for assessing QALYs in trials does not include any discussion of the sensitivity to the dimensions of these instruments, which is quite important in the choice of instruments. It would add further insights to readers if a more comprehensive comparison of the instruments is added (e.g. Richardson et al. 2013). The Assessment Quality of Life measure (AQLQ) could have been mentioned in this section, given the growing use of this instrument in many clinical trials worldwide. Finally, it would be helpful for readers if the authors had added a brief section on presenting the results or reporting the economic evaluation in trials, either after the section on transferability of the results from the trials or following the discussion on relevance of trial-based economic analyses. The inclusion of a reference to the Consolidated Health Economic Evaluation Reporting Standards (CHEERS) checklist would also be helpful.

Overall, this book is practical and useful. I would recommend it for those working on economic analyses alongside clinical trials. The language used in the book is clear and assessable to audiences who are in the health economics field or for those with analytical and statistical skills. This book is aimed at readers who study or work in the field of economics, health economics or public health – such as public health and health economic students, lecturers, researchers, health care policy makers and health service professionals. Readers should not expect to find a step-by-step guide of how to conduct an economic evaluation, what economic evaluation means or the types of economic evaluation. Rather, the book focuses on economic evaluation in clinical trials and the specific techniques of cost analysis in the trial context and, from an economist viewpoint; it is a great resource and an extremely practical guide.

References