

"HOW MUCH DO WE PAY FOR EXPENSIVE CANCER MEDICINES AND PERSONALIZED MEDICINE?"

13 NOVEMBER 2014: SYMPOSIUM HEALTH ECONOMICS

On 13 November the UT will organize the third annual symposium "Personalized Medicine and Health Economics" in collaboration with international partners. The symposium will take place at the Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Institute in Amsterdam on the theme of "paying for personalized medicine". The programme offers a wide variety of activities with speakers from various countries who will provide insights into the problems and opportunities created by the increasing availability of expensive cancer medicines.

We are confronted in the contemporary context with endlessly rising healthcare costs, and as part of the continuously ballooning costs of oncological medicines are driving urgent discussions. The current orthodoxy states that determining what society is willing to pay for discrete measurable health gains, using the metric of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs), makes it easier to determine whether public funding should be used to cover the costs of these new medicines. But framing this policy issue entirely in terms of public funding provision ignores the fact that these high costs at least partly result from manufacturers' bureaucracy and monopoly positions in introducing new drugs to market. Consequently, there are an increasing demands for government intervention to address these problems, for example through price negotiations and controls. There is also growing interest in the use of biosimilars, drugs based on the active ingredients of the original medicines: these have the advantage of being much cheaper, although their biochemical complexity makes much more research needed in this area.

Personalized medicine

The symposium provides a platform for an international group of speakers to provide new insights and perspectives into the problems and opportunities that exist around these expensive cancer medicines. Specific speakers will address the issue of the reimbursement of such medicines in a number of national contexts, including Germany, France and the US. Other speakers will address the particular problems arising from the use of companion diagnostics and next-generation sequencing, which makes it easier to identify those patients with high potential to benefit from particular medicines, allowing more specific prescription and targeting of these expensive drugs, a concept known as “personalized medicine”.

Sessions and panel discussion

The symposium is structured around three academic sessions and a separate panel discussion. The sessions successively explore the dilemmas posed by the challenge of publically reimbursing expensive cancer medicines, the implementation of personalized medicine from the perspective of both the oncologist and the patient, and finally difficulties in the uptake of biosimilars. A special session organized by the European Personalized Medicine Association (EPEMED) will also focus attention on the industry perspective. The day concludes with a panel discussion creating interaction between a select panel drawn from plenary speakers and the audience.

Collaboration

The symposium "Personalized Medicine and Health Economics" is organized jointly between the MIRA Research Institute of the University of Twente (the Netherlands), the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle (USA), the University of York (UK), UMIT in Hall (Austria) and CRP-Santé and EPEMED (both based in Luxembourg).

More information

The symposium takes place on 13th November 2014 starting at 9am at the Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital, Amsterdam (click here for location map). Application and registration is possible via <http://www.utwente.nl/mb/htsr/symposium/>.

More information is available from the President of the Symposium Committee, Professor Maarten IJzerman, HTSR (University of Twente) via m.i.ijzerman@utwente.nl or +31 6 10401932.