



CASE STUDY



CHINA



China has developed rapidly over recent decades, but the burdens of an ageing population and non-communicable disease have also grown. The Government of China recognises that health spending needs to be used efficiently on behalf of its 1.4 billion citizens. As part of the 'Healthy China 2030' initiative, and with the support of iDSI, it has made dramatic progress in embedding health technology assessments (HTAs) into the health system.

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Long-term partnerships in China

Putting evidence and analysis at the heart of China's health agenda

Health systems cannot be improved overnight. The partnerships and friendships built between iDSI team members and our China partners since 2009 show the value of network-building, trust, and evidence-based methods in creating long-term, fundamental change.

Our partnership began in 2009 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Chinese Ministry of Health and the UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). This has developed into a deep and long-lasting relationship, and HTAs are increasingly being absorbed into policies and institutions.

At the heart of our successful collaboration are the personal connections that have developed over time. Study visits, training, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building are vital: they create the individual friendships, and mutual trust and respect that create the conditions for progress.

The launch of the China Health Policy and Technology Assessment Network in 2016, supported by iDSI, has galvanised support for HTA from agencies across China. It also laid the groundwork for the National Center for Medicine and Health Technology Assessment, hosted by the China National Health and Development Research Center (CNHDC).

Big market, big opportunity

The Chinese health market is vast, with 5.5% of GDP being spent on health – a total of 387bn RMB (\$56bn USD).

30–40% of China's spending on medicines being wasted.



The World Health Organization estimates that 30–40% of this spending could be medicine wastage. If just 5% of the wastage could be saved – through an HTA-based process – \$2.8 billion could be reinvested in healthcare and 542,643 disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) could be saved.

Ensuring evidence leads to policy

We worked with the CNHDC on the Rural Health Reform from 2009, and this project showed that HTA-informed approaches could improve clinical outcomes, standardise practice, and control costs. It proved to be a catalyst for other successful collaborations in HTA, and the start of a deep, long-term partnership.

“We value the important work on clinical pathways, and we hope [iDSI] will continue helping us with the healthcare reforms in China.”

Mr Ma Xiaowei – Vice Minister of the National Health Commission, China

In 2016, the CNHDC established the China Health Policy Evaluation and Technology Assessment Network, with support from iDSI. The network provides a platform for training, awareness raising and experience

sharing on HTA and it is proving vital in institutionalising HTA in China. It has 48 member organisations (and growing), including universities, research institutes and hospitals, helping to spread best-practice across the country.

In collaboration with the iDSI partnership, CNHDC developed guidance for the technology assessment of medical devices, drugs, procedures and vaccines. CNHDC developed dedicated HTAs alongside, which focused on two vaccine evaluations and molecular diagnostics in tuberculosis.

Formal partnership

In 2018, the Government launched the National Center for Medicine and Health Technology Assessment. With the ongoing support of iDSI, CNHDC and the National HTA Center will assess new technologies, to inform decisions on what is included on the National Essential Medicines List (EML) and which interventions should be included in the country's basket of care. The goal is to build the necessary institutional infrastructure to guide policy, to ensure that priority-setting in health is based on evidence and value.

Working together, our focus is on implementing evidence-informed processes for national healthcare spending decisions. This is a key step in China's journey towards achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Personal connections

People-to-people engagement has been crucial in keeping the momentum behind HTA in China. Groups of high-level Chinese health leaders and professionals, from national and regional bodies, and clinical and non-clinical roles, have

“The long-term collaboration between CNHDC and iDSI is highly valued by CNHDC. One senior member described the relationship as ‘growing up together’. [It is] a mutually beneficial and supportive partnership.”

ITAD Learning Review (2018)

visited the UK each year since 2014, to learn about the UK health service, priority setting and decision making. The two-week study tour in 2019, for example, saw 27 delegates learn in depth about NHS primary care, NICE oncology evaluations, and health economics in general. The Global Health and Development Group at Imperial College is the UK's lead partner, and the National Health Commission of China (NHC) and the CNHDC from the Chinese side.

HTA workshops have taken place in



Support for these visits comes from the heart of both governments, and site visits, high-level meetings, talks and discussions have generated warmth and understanding over the years they have been taking place.

The personal connections created over many years allow ideas and knowledge to be shared in both directions, which ultimately benefits China's health system and China's 1.4 billion citizens.

To partner with us, bringing HTA and evidence-informed priority setting to resource constrained settings, contact: info@idsihealth.org