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# What is health technology assessment?

- **Health technology assessment (HTA)** is a multidisciplinary activity that systematically examines the safety, clinical efficacy and effectiveness, cost, cost-effectiveness, organisational implications, social consequences, legal and ethical considerations of the application of a health technology – usually a drug, medical device or clinical/surgical procedure.
- In the UK, HTA broadly focuses on two questions:
  - **Clinical effectiveness** – how do the health outcomes of the technology compare with available treatment alternatives?
  - **Cost-effectiveness** – are these improvements in health outcomes commensurate with the additional costs of the technology?
- HTA acts as '**a bridge**' between evidence and policy-making. It seeks to provide health policy-makers with accessible, useable and evidence-based information to guide their decisions about the appropriate use of technology and the efficient allocation of resources.
- Over the last decade, three key national policy-making 'HTA customers' have emerged: the **National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence**, the **Scottish Medicines Consortium** and the **All Wales Medicines Strategy Group**.

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