Pharmacoeconomics in Iran: It Is Time to Take It into Practice

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Demands for new health procedures including recently developed drugs and new indications for established drugs are increasing throughout the world (1). Due to budget constraints not all health technologies can be financed and health care decision makers need to analyze the clinical, economic and ethical aspects of health care programs in a structured way to enable them to make the best choices (2).

Pharmacoeconomics applies the scientific techniques of health economics to pharmaceutical and drug related areas (1).

Pharmacoeconomics is an interdisciplinary science which applies elements from pharmacy, pharmacology, clinical medicine, economics, statistics, epidemiology, psychology and ethics and can be defined as the detection, measurement, and comparison of both the clinical effectiveness and potential overall costs of different drugs or pharmaceutical services (3). Health economics evaluates the supply and demand for health care interventions and pharmacoeconomics utilizes the health economics principles and techniques to the field of pharmaceutical policy. Pharmacoeconomic evaluation is based on the concept of cost effectiveness which helps decision makers to devise rational priorities amongst different available health care services by selecting the most effective and the least costly strategies (1).

Maximizing health benefits within the constraints of limited health care resources is one of the major goals of cost-effectiveness analysis. In cost-effectiveness analysis of clinical interventions, the identification of costs is critical. Often new clinical methods, appliances or medicines are more costly than existing alternatives, but these additional costs can be partially offset by savings from enhanced effectiveness or reduced adverse effects. Pharmacoeconomic techniques help to select the best choice by estimating the overall costs of a clinical intervention by considering all of the costs and savings (3).

Although Pharmacoeconomics came into sight in the late 1980s as an independent entity among the varied specialized economic techniques, it still can be considered as a new field of study in Iran. The Iranian Association of Pharma Management and Economics was established in 2006 (4) and the department of Pharmacoeconomics and Pharmaceutical Management in Tehran University of Medical Sciences has started its activity from 2008 (5).

Considering the rising health expenditures in Iran and the undeniable economic and clinical beneficiary impacts of pharmacoeconomic studies on efficiency of health care systems in many different countries around the world, it is time for our decision-makers to get more familiar with applied pharmacoeconomics and take it into practice in both micro and macro levels.
References