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Resolving Lingering Problems or Continued Support for Pseudoscience? The ICER Value Assessment Update

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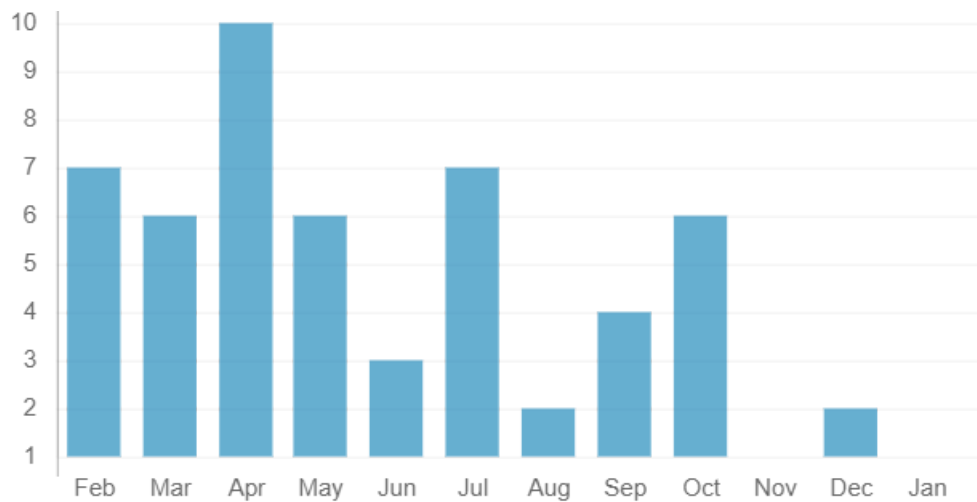
abstract

The Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER) released its updated value assessment framework in mid-2017. This included refinements to its conceptual structure and modifications to methods of collecting and assessing evidence. Consequent to this release, a number of authors have commented on the updated value framework, addressing the question of whether the latest framework represents a major revision or merely attempts to resolve lingering problems. The purpose of this commentary is twofold: (i) to revisit what are considered to be fundamental flaws in the ICER value assessment framework and (ii) to question whether or not post-release critiques of the value framework address the fundamental weaknesses in the ICER approach: the absence of credible, evaluable and replicable claims for the benefits and harms of a therapy intervention. The commentary argues that while ICER sees the purpose of its value assessment framework as forming ‘the backbone of rigorous, transparent evidence reports’ in placing ‘scientific methods of evidence analysis at the heart of a clearer and more transparent process’ it falls far short of these ideals.

Rather, in attempting to replicate in the US health care environment the evaluation framework mandated by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the UK, the ICER falls into the trap of generating value claims for product impact that fail to meet the standards of normal science.

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