



Commentary

FOR

ICER, ISPOR AND QALYs: Tales of Imaginary Worlds*Paul C Langley, PhD**Adjunct Professor, College of Pharmacy, University of Minnesota***Abstract**

Previous commentaries in the Formulary Evaluation section of INNOVATIONS in Pharmacy have modeled claims for cost-effectiveness and associated recommendations for pricing by the Institute (ICER). The principal objection to ICER reports has been that their modeled claims fail the standard seen as pseudoscience. The purpose of this latest commentary is twofold: first, to review the latest for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) on standards and value claims for model year (QALY) worlds in health technology assessments and (ii) given ICER's commitment to ISPOR standards of ICER's QALYs. The concern is that ICER gives the impression that there is a common and agreed constructs and that there is an agreed standard for creating QALYs within the imaginary reference commentary is to emphasize that there is no 'gold standard' QALY, let alone a 'gold standard' utility metric the QALY should be; it is an artificial construct which allows any number of competing QALYs to be constructed for a population under different imaginary constructs. Similar objections apply to the application of willingness to pay (WTP) as the sole arbiter, in pole position, of health technology assessments to support US. A threshold has to be defined for the QALYs and costs captured, by assumption, within the modeled population a \$50,000 cost per QALY threshold will yield different pricing recommendations depending on the QALY estimate, such as choice of utility metric, time spent by stage of disease, frequency and severity of disease. While this is an obvious point, it appears not to occur to those who, with a limited technical understanding, take at face value the ICER value judgements. Of course, it is also beside the point that the ICER reference case is based on empirical assessments of the claims made; we have no idea of whether it is right, if it is wrong and we will never know and were never intended to know.

Keywords: ICER, ISPOR, utility metric options, QALY options, imaginary worlds, pseudoscience, imaginary worlds

Introduction

The business model of the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER) rests on the construction of imaginary incremental cost-per-QALY worlds. Previous commentaries in *INNOVATIONS in Pharmacy* have pointed to the fact that these constructions, which are widely accepted by mainstream health technology assessment groups such as the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR), fail to meet the standards of normal science; they are best described as pseudoscience^{1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8}. They fail the demarcation test between science and non-science (cf. natural selection vs. intelligent design). While their supporters acknowledge that they fall outside of the normal activities of

imaginary worlds fails to meet the standards of normal science, still those who are prepared to

The purpose of this commentary that reviewed claims, is to consider ICER's paradigm⁹. In this arcane world, ICER identifies and measures QALY gains over a timeframe into the future. Claims are made against cost-per-QALY thresholds that are overlooked is that creating a