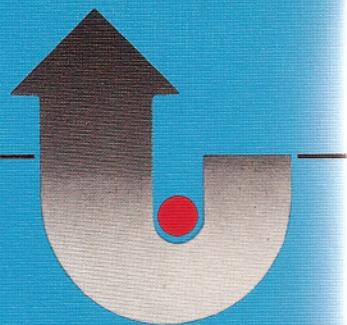


Health Systems
Research



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J. Rovira M. F. Drummond (Eds.)

Economic Aspects of AIDS and HIV Infection



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Preface

From the early days of its recognized occurrence, AIDS has been perceived as posing tremendous threats, burdens and challenges to human beings. Individuals, societies and, in a global point of view, mankind are affected by the effects of the HIV infection, the nature and extent of which is still unclear in many ways. In the beginning only biomedical and epidemiological analyses of the problem were the top research priorities, the former laden with great hopes that it may soon be possible to stop the spread of the disease and to overcome its physical impact. Yet it soon became clear that AIDS would be something to be reckoned and coped with on a long-term basis, making a thorough investigation of its impact absolutely mandatory.

AIDS has serious economic consequences. Taken seriously, they cannot be confined to predictions of costs intended to support the AIDS issue in the struggle for resources. Besides cost calculations – a methodologically tricky and wide-ranging topic in itself – and their application to cost-effectiveness and other analyses, economic issues include identifying and assessing patterns of care, analyzing problems of financing, exploring impacts on markets other than health care, and modelling scenarios for future developments and strategies. At present, the economic aspects of AIDS still constitute a very recent topic in European health economics and health systems research. Many projects are just about to start, and there must be a better exchange of information between research groups.

On behalf of the Concerted Action Committee (COMAC) on Health Services Research (HSR), the GSF-Institut für Medizinische Informatik und Systemforschung (MEDIS) convened an international conference on "Economic Aspects of AIDS and HIV Infection" in Munich, 16-18 March 1989. The conference forms a major part of a study contracted by COMAC-HSR to Professor Schwefel of GSF-MEDIS. In conducting the study, Professor Schwefel was assisted by Dr. Leidl. The full study comprises the examination of research groups and issues (which was conducted in the study phase prior to the Munich meeting), the conference, and support for stimulating concerted European research action in this field.

The participants of the workshop were invited according to a number of criteria. The topics relevant to European countries were to be represented adequately, and there was to be balanced representation of researchers from the various European countries. Furthermore, researchers and experts working in international organizations were asked

to participate. Finally, each participant was asked to play an active role by giving a lecture and writing a paper.

Researchers from nearly all the countries of the European Communities accepted the invitation; some workers from neighboring countries like Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America also participated. Within the groups of EC countries, however, some were slightly overrepresented, others slightly underrepresented at the conference. This was due to the selection criteria and the response rate.

The papers given at the conference form the basis of this publication. Some contributions not presented at the conference were also accepted. All papers submitted passed through an editorial review process. The review was supported by Professor Rovira, who was responsible for the sections 'Exploring Spread and Context' and 'Patterns of Health Care and Social Support Systems', Professor Drummond who commented on the section 'Costs of AIDS', and Dr. Leidl who took care of the sections 'Financial Aspects', 'Scenarios and Policies', and 'Prospects'. Besides the COMAC-HSR study, other activities in the European region are also concerned with the economic aspects of AIDS. To avoid unnecessary duplication and to coordinate the planning of international research, an exchange between these projects has been arranged. One study focuses more on the methodological aspects, especially of costing issues; it was initiated by the World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe. Another project, promoted by the same institution, is concerned with scenarios on the social and economic impact of AIDS.

The focus of the COMAC conference and of this book is on the exploration of economic aspects, on empirical approaches, on case studies, and, last but not least, on modelling techniques for economic scenarios. We hope this collection provides an up-to-date overview of the state of economic research on AIDS in Europe, and that it may stimulate further work to come.

Finally, we are greatly indebted to our colleagues at the MEDIS Institute whose steady and thorough team work transformed the pile of manuscripts into a camera-ready publication. In the editorial assistance, Mrs. Ursula Weber managed the technical production of texts, graphics, references, and the general bibliography. Mr. Darwin Santo took over the tremendous task of processing all the manuscripts into their final form. Mrs. Frauke Hömig supplemented some of the graphics. Dr. Walter Satzinger and Dr. Andreas Mielck assisted in the editing of a number of papers.

Contents

Preface	V
-------------------	---

Introduction

Social Sciences, Economics and AIDS <i>D. Schwefel</i>	3
---	---

Exploring Spread and Context of AIDS and HIV Infection

Patterns of AIDS and HIV Infection in Europe <i>A.M. Downs, R.A. Ancelle-Park, I. de Vincenzi, J-B. Brunet</i>	19
---	----

Demographic Impact of Mortality from AIDS in France: Projection for 1991 <i>M. Guiguet, A.J. Valleron</i>	38
---	----

Social and Political Aspects of AIDS <i>J. Santos Lucas</i>	43
--	----

Economic Aspects of AIDS <i>J. Rovira</i>	49
--	----

Patterns of Health Care and Social Support Systems

The US Hospital AIDS Survey: Structure and Substance <i>D.P. Andrulis</i>	59
--	----

Description and Analysis of Patterns of Outpatient Care for AIDS Patients and HIV Infected Persons <i>G. Brenner</i>	67
--	----

Social Support Systems for People Affected by AIDS. Observations from West Germany <i>W. Satzinger</i>	80
--	----

Use of Sentinel Systems in the Evaluation of the Impact of AIDS and HIV Infection G. Thiers, M. Denayer, A. Stroobant	90
---	----

Services for the Management of HIV Infection: Problems for Planners A.M. Johnson	98
--	----

Costs of AIDS and HIV Infection

Economic Evaluation of Programmes for AIDS and HIV Infection: Methodological Issues M. Drummond, L. Davies	107
--	-----

The Economic Analysis of Prevention of HIV Infection: Evaluation of Programmes and Decision Support for Priority Setting in Health Policy. Case Study. Sweden M. Lagergren	118
---	-----

The Cost of AIDS and HIV Infection: Public Expenditures for AIDS Prevention in the Federal Republic of Germany A. Jenke, A.-M. Reinkemeier	127
---	-----

The Costs of Hospital Care of AIDS Patients at the Teaching Hospital of the University of Amsterdam P.R.E. Bijlsma	136
--	-----

Direct and Indirect Costs of AIDS in Belgium: A Preliminary Analysis J. Lambert, G. Carrin	151
--	-----

Hospital Costs for AIDS Patients B. Olesen, P. Gøtzsche, I. Bygbjerg, L. Møller, V. Faber . . .	160
--	-----

Comparing Inpatient and Outpatient Costs for HIV, LAS and AIDS: Methodology, Results and Consequences from a Study in Germany R. Hanpft, F. Reinecke, F. Beske	164
---	-----

Medical Services and Costs of AIDS Patients in an Outpatient Clinic for Infectious Diseases, Frankfurt University Hospital I. Gschrey-Düver, H. Exner-Freisfeld, A. Koock-Walewski, C. zur Lippe, R. Müller, S. Staszewski, W. Stille	172
---	-----

AIDS/HIV Costs in England: The Case of the Oxfordshire District <i>M. Rees</i>	187
The Regional Costs of AIDS in Spain <i>J. Ginestal Gómez</i>	195
Indicators and Trends of Direct and Indirect Costs of AIDS on a National Level: Results from Switzerland <i>M.R.H. Pedergnana</i>	203
Costs of AIDS in a Developing Area: Indirect and Direct Costs of AIDS in Puerto Rico <i>D.S. Shepard</i>	226

Financial Aspects

Some Implications of AIDS for Permanent Health Insurance <i>A.D. Wilkie</i>	241
--	-----

Scenarios and Policies

Planning for AIDS or HIV Related Services in Greece: First Steps towards Operational Schemes <i>M. Diomidis, A. Sissouras</i>	251
Epidemiological Models and Socioeconomic Information: Methodological Aspects of AIDS/HIV Scenario Analysis <i>J.C. Jager, M.J. Postma, F.M. van den Boom, D.P. Reinking, J.C.C. Borleffs, S.H. Heisterkamp, J.A.M. van Druten, E.J. Ruitenberg</i>	262
Model-Based Scenarios to Describe Economic Impacts of AIDS: The Role of Case-Mix <i>R. Leidl</i>	282
Scenarios as a Tool to Support Health Planning and Management <i>R.F. Schreuder</i>	295
Main Policy Issues of the Social and Economic Impact of AIDS from the Perspective of a Health Ministry <i>X. Scheil-Adlung</i>	302

Prospects

The Economic Evaluation of Care Programmes for
Patients with HIV-AIDS

A. Maynard 311

International Research Needs for AIDS

S. Wayling, H. Zöllner 328

Future Research Policies

H. Stein 344

References 349