

Can we put a price on healthcare innovation in cancer?

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Most media attention is awarded to cancer's success stories - new treatment breakthroughs are celebrated as researchers (and journalists) search for an exciting new "cure" for cancer. But what happens after these innovations hit the news? And who is going to buy them?

The newest drugs are frequently the most costly, and healthcare systems are already struggling. Where is the money going? And is there evidence that the money spent on innovation actually benefits [cancer patients](#)?

That's why the latest Special Issue from *ecancermedicalscience* tackles the overlooked topic of health economics in cancer care. We've collected five new papers ranging from the policy level to the personal.

The papers have been curated by expert Guest Editor Prof Wim van Harten of the Netherlands Cancer Institute, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

"The pipeline of new drugs is impressive, and health systems are already struggling with the fast-growing list of extremely high-priced treatments on the market," says Prof Harten.

"This will inevitably put further strain on healthcare budgets - some politicians state that they are already nearing the maximum that Western countries can bear."

The papers address the questions raised above, and offer solutions -

including some methods to assess the "value" of healthcare innovation, allowing policymakers to make informed decisions about where funds should be spent.

But it's not just policy that needs to change - these papers address the cost of healthcare at the patient interface as well.

"When physicians prescribe cancer treatment, we should consider if we would make the same decision if we were paying for the treatment ourselves," says contributing author Dr Guy Storme of the Universitair Ziekenhuis Brussel, Brussels, Belgium. "I think this would lead to a positive change in mentality - one of my colleagues has already changed his clinical practice in this way."

Dr Storme adds, "I would like the public to understand the real benefit and cost of each treatment, because most never see the cost breakdowns - and the added value of the individual treatment!"

For those who haven't previously considered the costs of [cancer care](#), the Special Issue will provide a thorough review of the subject.

More information: Guy Storme et al, The cost of cancer care is not related to its outcomes, *ecancermedalscience* (2016). [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2016.687](#)

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