

Centre for Health Economics

Seminar Series

'Health Care Decision Making: A Focus Group Study Involving Health Professionals and the General Public'

Presented by

Dr John McKie

Date: Wednesday 18th July, 2007
Time: 1:00-2:00pm
Venue: RB Scotton Room
2nd Floor, Building 75
Monash University
Clayton, 3800



Most countries appear to believe that their health system is in a state of semi-crisis with expenditures rising rapidly, with the benefits of many services unknown and with pressure from the public to ensure access to a comprehensive range of services. But whose values should inform decision-making in the health area, and should the influence of different groups vary with the level of decision-making? These questions were put to 54 members of the public and health professionals in eight focus groups. Adopting a different perspective from other studies, participants were not asked if particular groups should be involved in decisions but rather through deliberation and discussion nominated their own potential decision makers. This delivered a clear message that participants saw a legitimate role for a broad range of stakeholders in priority-setting decisions so as to incorporate a diversity of expertise and opinion. Companion themes were the acknowledgment that decisions involve ethical judgments and are not purely technical, that the power of special interest groups (such as clinicians) should be kept in check, and that the process by which decisions are reached is important. The results suggest that qualitative methods of investigation have the potential to improve the legitimacy of policy decisions by contributing to a better understanding of the values of the public and health professionals, and by expanding the range of options available for further research.

Presenter

Dr McKie is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Health Economics. His main research interests are in the identification and measurement of social values, and ethical issues in health economics. Dr McKie, Professor Jeff Richardson, and others at the Centre, are currently working on a project examining the preferences of the Australian public on a wide range of equity issues, including whether priority should be given to those who can benefit most from treatment, whether younger patients should have priority over older patients, and whether the permanently disabled should receive special consideration.

VISITORS ARE MOST WELCOME. The Seminar Series is free of charge. For confirmation of your attendance and further information please telephone 9905 0733 or email che@buseco.monash.edu.au