

The significant impact of Health Technology Assessment discussions on national health systems

Every year, Health Action International (HAI) accepts a few bright and ambitious students into its internship programme at our bustling Amsterdam headquarters. This provides valuable educational experience for students who are interested in conducting research and/or advocacy on a number of access to medicines issues in the European Union or internationally.

This year, our interns spent their first few weeks in the office before the working from home requirements as a result of [COVID-19](#). Instead, they have continued their work from home, shifting their focus slightly to accommodate the new arrangements.

We wanted to learn a little more about what each of them have been doing, and how they've managed to adapt their work in recent weeks. Today, we're hearing from Simon Geukes, who studies at the University of Amsterdam and is investigating European collaboration on [Health Technology Assessment \(HTA\)](#) as part of his internship at HAI.

Watch this space in the coming weeks for our monthly intern spotlight. And if you're interested in doing an internship at HAI, you'll find more information about how to apply [here](#).

How has your research approach/project changed since having to work from home?

I am investigating European collaboration on Health Technology Assessment (HTA). Project-wise, not much has changed for me. However, I was planning to do fieldwork in Germany and Portugal to ask relevant stakeholders for their opinion, which I will now have to do it over Skype from home. It is of course not too bad, and I am happy that the project can continue, although the field trips would have been interesting and fun.

In general, I miss working in the office, just dropping by for a chat, and keeping up with the others. Also, I looked forward to attending meetings and conferences to meet with other people in the field. These are unfortunately all cancelled for now, but hopefully there will be other opportunities later in the year.

What's the best part of research into HTA, and what's the worst or hardest part?

What I like most about the topic is that it is currently very relevant. HTA discussions in Europe are expected to continue soon and their results may have a significant impact on national health systems. The most difficult part for me is to combine the relatively concrete questions that we have for this project with a solid theoretical background.

What do you wish people would know about your topic?

Before I started this internship, I did not realise really how much is determined by politics, even on these technical levels. Specifically it's intriguing to see that everybody involved has the same good intentions, yet discussions come to a grinding halt over a mixed set of preferences. So, I guess what would be good for people to know on this topic - sorry for the cliché - is that the people representing us in the EU matter. Go vote!

What would you tell someone else looking at doing an internship at HAI?

I believe HAI as an organisation is unique in the combination of its organisational structure, the way it operates, and the goals it is trying to achieve. It is a great place to first-hand experience academic research being brought into practice, and working with motivated people for a good cause is definitely fulfilling.

What do you think is the single most important thing in this area at the moment and why

I think the most important thing for now is to get the ball rolling again, to get things moving. It appears as if the concerns for collaboration on HTA on a European level come down to disagreements on really just a couple of key issues. So I guess what would be good is for all parties to come together and have focused talks to resolve these issues.