



Annual Newsletter 2024

MaastrichtHETA /ISPOR-SC

Networking in Health Economics

Welcome

On May 2022, during the Lola Health Economics Study Group (LolaHESG) conference held in Maastricht, we launched the **Maastricht Health Economics and Technology Assessment Center** (MaastrichtHETA).

MaastrichtHETA unites academics from Maastricht University (UM) and Maastricht University Medical Center (Maastricht UMC+), and includes about 60 researchers in the field of health economics and health technology assessment. MaastrichtHETA develops and disseminates innovative methodology and knowledge for advancing, promoting and teaching best practices in health economics and health technology assessment.

We are pleased to share our annual newsletter, keeping you up to date with all the news and activities that took place in 2024. The newsletter includes:

- an introduction of the ISPOR-Student Chapter Board,
- past PhD defenses,
- participation at past conferences and upcoming conferences,
- an introduction of new colleagues,
- achievements and new obtained roles,
- our past seminars and planned future activities,
- other upcoming courses,
- a list of publications.

We wish you a good reading and remain at your disposal to bring health economics and technology assessment in your research.

MaastrichtHETA

Health Economics and Technology Assessment



ISPOR

Improving healthcare decisions

ISPOR STUDENT CHAPTER

As part of the MaastrichtHETA Centre, the ISPOR student chapters provides a platform to connect with colleagues in the field of health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) by organising various events like workshops, lectures, journal clubs, and much more. Feel free to join our activities, meet colleagues and expand your health economics network.

Follow us to stay informed about our upcoming events and get up-to-date information about current developments and topics in the field. For more information and to sign up for the ISPOR-SC newsletter, please reach out to ispor-sc@maastrichtuniversity.nl

We are looking forward to meeting you!

Board members academic year 2024-2025



Dr. Mickaël Hiligsmann
(Faculty advisor)



Bradley Sugden
(President)



Andrea Fernandez
Coves (Secretary)



Darin Elabassy
(Social Media)



Nele Raskin



Nannan Li



Anne Kleijburg



Isabell Wiethoff

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Maastricht University



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MaastrichtHETA
Health Economics and Technology Assessment

PAST PhD DEFENSES

Lieke Maas successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled “Optimizing quality of care in fracture patients at high risk of new fractures and patients with drug-resistant epilepsy eligible for resective brain surgery: patient-centered care and economic assessments” supervised by Dr. Mickael Hiligsmann, Prof. Dr. Annelies Boonen and Dr. Kim Rijkers on November 20



On 9th December 2024, **Ute Linnenkamp** successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled “Assessment of comorbid depression in patients with diabetes: an analysis of instruments, costs, patterns of health care use and future utilization” supervised by Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrea Icks, Dr. Mickaël J. C. Hiligsmann, Prof. dr. Silvia M. A. A. Evers, and co-supervised by Prof. Dr. Barbara Hoffmann. Ute wrote the following piece on her PhD:

“The opportunity to pursue a binational PhD has proved a distinctive and rewarding experience, offering the chance to engage with the academic environments at both the Center for Health and Society (CHS) at the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf and the Care and Public Health Research Institute (CAPHRI) at Maastricht University. Navigating the administrative hurdles presented a challenge, as this was the first binational degree offered by both institutions.

However, there were always people at both institutions who were eager to help and who managed to solve all evolving problems while maintaining a calm and supportive approach.

The doctoral program was concluded with a non-public defense in Düsseldorf on 22 August, during which the research was presented to a select group of scholars. The small group setting enabled in-depth, concentrated debate, offering constructive input and strengthening links within the academic community.

The culmination of these efforts was reached on 9 December, when the dissertation was publicly defended in the Aula of Maastricht. This event provided a broader platform for disseminating my findings to a wider audience, including both academics and the general public.

This binational experience has not only shaped my research but also facilitated my personal and professional growth, fostering a deeper understanding of the academic landscapes in both countries. I hope that I have paved the way for other candidates who are considering pursuing a binational degree at both institutions.”

CONTRIBUTIONS AT PAST CONFERENCES

LOLA HESG 2024

The 16th edition of the lolaHESG (lowlands Health Economists' Study Group) conference took place on 16-17 May 2024. The conference was organised by HERA (Health Economics Research Amsterdam) and held at Landgoed ISVW in Leusden in the Netherlands. The conference saw three of our Chapter members, Isabell Wiethoff, Darin Elabbasy, and Andrea Fernández Coves attend to present their ongoing research



EUHEA2024: OPENING UP PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTH ECONOMICS

Between June 30 and July 3, 2024, **Silvia Evers** and **Isabell Wiethoff** had the pleasure of visiting Vienna, where they attended the EuHEA2024 (European Health Economics Association) congress.

During the congress, Isabell took part in a workshop on “Choice Modelling in Health: Eliciting and Modelling Stated Preferences for Health Interventions”, including a hands-on practical on discrete choice experiments. She also had the opportunity to present her own research: “a trial-based economic evaluation project on the screening of emotional and cognitive problems in patients with stroke”, a collaborative project between the OLVG hospital in Amsterdam and Maastricht University. A highlight of the week was the social event at Vienna’s stunning City Hall, where participants enjoyed networking in a majestic setting, with some classical music and a delicious dinner.

Beyond the sessions, Silvia and Isabell connected with Markus Vomhof and Jan Dyczmons from the **chs institute in Düsseldorf**, where Isabell is staying for a **research exchange** between November 2024 and March 2025.

Looking back, it was an inspiring week, enriched by meeting new people, great conversations, and Vienna’s beautiful summer weather.



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

LOLA HESG 2025

You are cordially invited to the 17th edition of the lolaHESG (lowlands Health Economists' Study Group) conference that will take place **on 22-23 May 2025**. The conference is organised by RIVM and UMC Utrecht and held at "de Heerlicheid van Ermelo" in the Netherlands.

Registration for the conference closes on 1 May 2025, unless full capacity is reached before this date. For more information, please check the corresponding website <https://research.umcutrecht.nl/events/lolahesg-conference-17th-edition/>



EUHEA PHD SUPERVISOR CONGRESS 2025



The Call for Abstract ended. Notifications for accepted abstracts will be sent out on 18th April 2025.

The Institute of Health and Society and the Institute of Economic and Social Research at the Université Catholique de Louvain are proud to host the 12th EuHEA PhD & Supervisor Conference, to be held on the Brussels-Woluwe Campus on **September 3-5, 2025**.

EuHEA's PhD & Supervisor Conference presents a great opportunity for PhD students and early career researchers in health economics to present their research. A specific feature of the conference is its interactive format, in which papers presented will be discussed by other students' supervisors.

The friendly and constructive environment make this conference an excellent place to gain new insights, get feedback, and network with peers.

ISPOR EUROPE 2025

Join global healthcare leaders as they convene at ISPOR Europe 2025, the leading global conference in Europe for Health Economics and Outcomes Research (HEOR), 9-12 November, for discussion and dissemination of the latest trends in healthcare. This must-attend event provides you with dedicated opportunities to network with your peers, HEOR experts, and thought leaders, and to discuss with a global audience how we establish, incentivise, and share value sustainable for health systems, patients, and technology developers.

Abstract Submission Closes: 6th June (for panels) and 27th June (for research).



NEW COLLEAGUES

Hello everyone,

My name is Nina van Lier, and I am a new PhD student at Health Services Research at Maastricht University. My project focuses on the @ease peer-support working method in the Netherlands, which is a mental health support intervention for young people between 12-25 years of age. I will be making an economic evaluation (trial-based) as well as conducting a process-evaluation. In addition, I will be making an economic evaluation (trial- and model-based) and budget impact analysis for another project, which is CARE-FIT, an eHealth support method for patients during and/or after cancer treatment, that provides individual counseling for sleep, stress levels, and physical activity.

Because of my background in health technology assessment for epilepsy surgery, my research master in biomedical sciences, and four years of educational support and tutoring for high school students, these projects resonate with my personal interests and experience. I am curious to see what the future holds and how my research can impact healthcare and well-being!



Hi everyone,

I am Mabel Wieman, 22 years old, and as of October 2024 a new PhD candidate at KEMTA. I came to Maastricht four years ago to follow the Bachelors Health sciences with a specialization in Digital Technology and Care.

Last summer, I obtained my master's degree as well in Health and Digital Transformation, which is a completely new study at the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences. At KEMTA, I will be working on evaluating AI-based health technologies under uncertainty and I am involved in the External Assessment Group for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Hi everyone,

I am Teresa Holly, 27 years old and I moved from Koblenz, Germany to the lovely city of Maastricht in October for my 4-year PhD with KEMTA. This summer, I completed my European masters in health economics specializing in economic evaluation, which was jointly taught by the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Universities of Bologna and Oslo.

As part of the Pre-Act Horizon Europe project, my research will focus on the cost-effectiveness of predicting radiotherapy side effects using explainable AI in breast cancer. I will also support KEMTA's external assessment group affiliated with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, UK.





Dear colleagues,

My name is Christopher Mugari. I joined the Maastricht family as an external PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life sciences on the 10th of October 2024. I hold a Master of Science in Public Health, majoring in Health economics and Financing degree, from the University of Zimbabwe.

My PhD research project is on the Economic Assessment of prevention strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa. I am currently working on a systematic review of the cost effectiveness of HIV prevention interventions in Sub-Saharan.

I am very glad to be part of the research family and eager to learn more about the current projects and explore potential collaboration opportunities.

Christopher Mugari.

My name is Fredrick Zmudzki, I am a health economist consultant based in Sydney, Australia, and Maastricht University PhD candidate since April 2024. In addition to my academic research and industry projects I have been deeply involved in machine learning for the past 8 years. My UM project has unfolded from curiosity, not only in what machine learning could bring to healthcare, but what we thought it would not be able to do.

Although AI is continually showing impressive capabilities using reliable data with a clear clinical endpoint, could it also be of value for clinical decision support in chronic pain treatment, where most data are subjective patient reported measures, and there is no single reliable outcome measure? Initial work since September 2021 is promising, but it hasn't been straightforward. We developed a framework of 13 clinical endpoints and trained algorithms separately for each one.

Remarkably, although as expected no single outcome provided a reliable indicator, the complete set of algorithms established a stratified prognostic patient profile that helps identify patients likely to benefit from multimodal pain treatment. This work has the potential to enhance clinical decision support, leading to improved personalised assessment and treatment, and increased effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. I am grateful to my PhD supervisors, Professor Rob Smeets and Associate Professor Mickaël Hiligsmann, for their guidance in integrating clinical AI into cost-effectiveness modelling.

Best regards, Fredrick.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEW ROLES



In 2024, Dr Mickael Hiligsmann was appointed Chair-Elect of the ISPOR (International Society for Health Economics and Outcomes Research) Medication Adherence and Persistence Special Interest Group. This group is dedicated to advancing research and evaluation on medication adherence, treatment persistence, and their impact on health outcomes.

As part of his role, he chaired the forum session titled "Current Regulations and Best Practices for Defining, Measuring, and Reporting Medication Adherence in Clinical Trials" at the ISPOR European Congress held in Barcelona last November.

Our PhD candidate Nizar Alsubahi has been actively engaged in the Economics Evaluation in Healthcare seminar by the Open Medical Institute, where he contributed to discussions on healthcare economics. He explored how economic evaluation methods can be leveraged to enhance healthcare decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and improve patient-centered care in Saudi Arabia. He says "It was a great opportunity to engage with experts in healthcare economics, exchange insights on cost-effectiveness and policy implications, and broaden my perspective on applying economic principles to improve healthcare quality and decision-making".

Nizar presented his research at CaRe Day 2024 with a paper titled, "Patient-Centered Care and Satisfaction of Patients with Diabetes: Insights from a Survey among Patients at Primary Healthcare Centers in Saudi Arabia."

He stated, "It was fantastic days for researchers in healthcare and public health to share their work, engage in meaningful discussions, and receive constructive feedback from peers and experts. Presenting my research at this event was an enriching experience, as it not only allowed me to showcase my findings but also provided valuable insights that can enhance the impact of my work. He sends a message for researchers: I strongly encourage students and early-career researchers to participate in such events, as they offer an excellent opportunity to refine research ideas, receive diverse perspectives, and contribute to the broader scientific community. Constructive feedback is invaluable in improving the quality and relevance of our studies, ultimately leading to more impactful research in healthcare.



Nizar recently achieved a significant milestone with the acceptance of his paper in a high-impact journal. His publication, titled "Healthcare quality from the perspective of patients in Gulf Cooperation Council countries: a systematic literature review," was published in Healthcare, 2024.

Nizar Alsubahi is conducting his PhD project under the supervision of **Prof. Dr. Wim Groot** and **Prof. Dr. Milena Pavlova**.

Seminar Evaluation Economics in healthcare, Salzburg, November 2024



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Teebah Abu-Zahra:



Dears,

I would like to contribute to the following for this newsletter:

1) With my team we developed a decision tool (SMART) that helps its user to evaluate the consequences of simplifying decision analytical model for the model's validity and transparency. I presented this paper in both IolaHESG (Lowlands Health Economists' Study Group) conference 2024, and the RExPO2024 conference in Munich. Please note though, that it's still a work in progress.

2) In November 2024, I applied and was accepted as a board member in the Promovendi Netwerk Nederland (PNN), which is the national interest organization for and by PhD candidates in the Netherlands. My portfolio will focus on Labour conditions - external, international and scholarship PhD candidates, and my contract with them starts from January 2025.

3) I published my first PhD article "How health technology assessment can help to address challenges in drug repurposing: a conceptual framework" in Drug Discovery Today. In this article, we developed a framework outlining key challenges in drug repurposing projects. Then, we explored when and how health technology assessment (HTA) methods can address them. Here is the link.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359644624001338?via%3Dihub>

As a PhD alumni of Maastricht University, Jalal Dahham remains affiliated as a Health Economics Researcher and has taken on the role of PhD co-supervisor, offering guidance and support to PhD students.

Beyond Maastricht, he serves as Coordinator of the Health Economics Division at the INSPECT-LB Research Group and is a member of the Editorial Review Board for Global Smart Food Systems – Gold Open Access Journal (Emerald Publishing). He is also regularly invited as a Visiting Guest Lecturer at Lebanese American University, Qatar University, and other leading institutions.

Jalal is actively involved in several research projects and papers, focusing on health quantification, health outcome evaluation, and cost-effectiveness assessments of health interventions, particularly in LMICs. His latest 2024 publication on Health-Related Quality of Life among Multiple Sclerosis patients in Lebanon was published in Multiple Sclerosis and Related Disorders. The study utilized comprehensive QoL instruments to categorize patients by disease severity, uncovering key insights into the demographic, clinical, and socioeconomic factors influencing HRQoL. Health-related quality of life and utilities among Lebanese patients with Multiple Sclerosis: A cross-sectional study - ScienceDirect



Alongside his research, he engages in media contributions, including TV interviews aimed at raising public awareness on health economics. All of this is in addition to his ongoing role as Senior Economic Advisor at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Qatar.

PAST MAASTRICHT HETA / ISPOR-SC ACTIVITIES

- October 1st 2024
AI in health economics – Session I: Opportunities of AI in health economics
- October 10th 2024
AI in health economics – Session II: Practical tips and own experience
- February 2nd 2025
Principles of design for non-designers by Darin Elabbasy
- March 20th 2025
Discrete Choice Experiments: introductory presentation and on-going research by Brigitte Essers (MUMC), Katja Heinz (UM), Isabell Wiethoff (UM), Nele Raskin (UM)

UPCOMING MAASTRICHT HETA/ ISPOR-SC ACTIVITIES

- April 17th 2025 between 9:00 – 10:00 (Online)
Journal Club: DCE.
- May 15th 2025 between 9:00 -10:00
DCE Interactive session II: EuHEA 2024 pre-conference workshop
- June 12th 2025 between 9:00 – 13:00
MaastrichtHETA/ISPOR-SC Researcher Day – incl. HPIM students

KEMTA MASTER CLASSES 2025

KEMTA regularly organises master classes for staff interested in research methods. The master classes provide concise insights into a range of topics, from the basics of research design, to statistics and topics such as early HTA.

All Masterclasses will take place from 16:30 - 18:00 (exact location will be communicated before class). For registrations, additional information or suggestions for new masterclass topics, please contact Irene Vrancken (irene.vrancken@mumc.nl).



Upcoming classes for 2025:

- 10th April: Systematic reviews (Andrea Peeters)
- 20th May: Trial-based economic evaluation (Brigitte Essers)
- 10th June: Predictie (Sander van Kuijk)
- 18th September: Herziening Nederlandse richtlijn economische evaluatie (Merel Kimman)
- 21st October: Kwalitatief onderzoek (Daisy De Bruijn/Monique Bessems)
- 13th November: Safety II in de praktijk (Dorthe Klein)
- 11th December: Scientific Writing (Andrea Peeters)

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

--- 2024 ---

- Scholte, M., Bendicksen, L., Grimm, S. E., & Abu-Zahra, T. et al. (2024). A Regulatory Roadmap for Repurposing: Comparing Pathways for Making Repurposed Drugs Available In The EU, UK, And US. *Journal of Law Medicine & Ethics*, 52(4), 940-949.
- van den Bulck, A., Hertroijs, D., & Elissen, A. (2024). Impactanalyse Stichting Palga: De impact van Palga op de Nederlandse gezondheidszorg volgens stakeholders: huidige stand van zaken en innovatiekansen. Maastricht University.
- Zwakhalen, S., Drost, R., van Mastrigt, G., & Vluggen, S. et al. (2024). EFFECTEN EN KOSTEN VAN EEN INTERVENTIE VOOR VERPLEGING EN VERZORGING TER BEVORDERING VAN ZELFREDZAAMHEID, EIGEN REGIE, LEVENSKWALITEIT EN FUNCTIONALITEIT (ZELF) VAN VERPLEEGHUISBEWONERS. *VGEBulletin*, 41(1), 10-13.
- Nogués, X., Ovejero, D., Giménez-Argente, C., & Rodríguez-Morera, J. et al. (2024). Preferencias de los pacientes de habla hispana para la comunicación del riesgo de fractura por osteoporosis. Un subestudio del Risk Communication in Osteoporosis Study (Estudio RICO). *Revista de Osteoporosis y Metabolismo Mineral*, 16(3), 79-87. Article 00048.
- Camilletti, E., Gassmann, F., Groot, W., & Martorano, B. (2024). Child Work in Developing Countries: Revisiting the Differences and Similarities Between Income-Generating and Care and Domestic Work. *Journal of Development Studies*. Advance online publication.
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- Kardas, P., Bennett, B., Borah, B., & Burnier, M. et al. (2024). Medication non-adherence: reflecting on two decades since WHO adherence report and setting goals for the next twenty years. *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, 15, Article 1444012.
- Leao, D. L. L., Moers, L. A. M., Cremers, H.-P., & van Veghel, D. et al. (2024). Facilitating and inhibiting factors affecting the Netherlands Heart Network. *Journal of Public Health*. Advance online publication.
- Reginster, J.-Y., Silverman, S. L., Alokail, M., & Al-Daghri, N. et al. (2024). Cost-effectiveness of radiofrequency echographic multi-spectrometry for the diagnosis of osteoporosis in the United States. *JBMR plus*, 9(1), Article ziae138.
- Yaros, J. (2024). A call to unify cost and economic impact research of health professions education. *Medical Education*. Advance online publication.
- Schoonvelde, S. A. C., Wiethoff, I., Zwetsloot, P. P., & Hirsch, A. et al. (2024). Loss of quality of life and increased societal costs in patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: the AFFECT-HCM study. *European heart journal - Quality of care & clinical outcomes*, (2). Advance online publication.
- Sharma, J., Pavlova, M., & Groot, W. (2024). Challenges and Opportunities for Universal Health Coverage in South Asia: A Scoping Review. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health*. Advance online publication.

- Germeni, E., Fifer, S., Hiligsmann, M., & Stein, B. et al. (2024). A genuine need or nice to have? Understanding HTA representatives' perspectives on the use of patient preference data. *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*, 40(1), Article e60.
- Kleijburg, A., Wijnen, B., den Hollander, W., & Evers, S. et al. (2024). Mapping of the health of the Nation Outcomes Scale (HoNOS) and Positive and Negative Symptom Scale (PANSS) to the EQ-5D-3L in psychosis patients using the PHAMOUS study. *Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics & Outcomes Research*, 1-12. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14737167.2024.2422456>
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