

The Cost of Treatment: The Three Wise Men Are the Parents

One of the most worrying questions for all health systems worldwide is patient accessibility to the treatments they need. Speaking of the health system is somehow intangible, as it involves a group of persons with different functions and views about the same object: health. In our country the word system is more complex to characterize than in other places, because we have several subsystems (public, private, social security) which differ, among other things, by their funding source. This point, the origin of funds that allow keeping the healthcare process continuously working is, possibly, one of the most relegated subjects in pre- and post-graduate medical programs. This situation is extended to the area of recommendations proposed by clinical practice guidelines and consensus of many scientific societies, in which the chief criterion to select a therapy is still efficacy (rarely considering effectiveness, i.e., the value) and aspects concerning as to how these health technologies are funded (i.e., the price) are disregarded. (1) It is as if cost were something ethereal, an almost tabu subject, that threatens our scientific judgement, leaving outside the analysis the system's equity and sustainability to provide these therapies. How much they cost, who pay for them and in what proportion should be unavoidable elements at the time of making recommendations. (2) Everything we propose has a price. This situation reminds me of

my children asking the Three Wise Men for very expensive toys. The explanation given to them every January 6 is that the Three Wise Men could not pay for them. The Three Wise Men are the parents: each toy gives happiness, but it has a price..... and we can't always make our children happy.

Conflicts of interest

None declared.

(See authors' conflicts of interest forms on the website/ Supplementary material)

Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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