



CASE STUDY: THE IMPACTS OF THE RAPID CONVERSION OF ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS (RACEES) PROGRAMME IN EXPANDING THE UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS

KEY AIMS

- Improve understanding of health economic evaluation among non-economists
- Increase confidence in interpreting and critiquing economic evidence
- Demystify economic concepts using clear, plain language and practical examples
- Build applied research capacity across health, social care, local authority, VCFSE and public adviser groups
- Enable participants to engage meaningfully with economic components of research proposals
- Support co-produced outputs that translate economic evidence into real-world practice
- Reduce technical and confidence barriers to involvement in health economics
- Strengthen skills in assessing value, cost-effectiveness and resource use
- Support equitable participation in research by widening access to methodological knowledge
- Create a supportive learning environment for early-stage and practice-based researchers
- Encourage interdisciplinary working between economists, clinicians, practitioners and public contributors
- Support the development of publishable commentaries and applied outputs
- Embed economic thinking earlier in service design, evaluation and decision-making
- Strengthen links between ARC NWC methodological expertise and applied research teams
- Contribute to a culture where economic evidence is routinely considered alongside clinical and experiential evidence

BACKGROUND

The RaCEEs programme aims to increase the understanding of health economic evaluations across the ARC NWC. So far, there have been three complete runs of the course (with the fourth run starting soon) involving over 30 participants from different ARC NWC member organisations, including health and social care professionals, staff from local authorities and third sector organisations, and public advisers.

The RaCEEs course intends to equip the participants with the knowledge required to critically appraise an economic evaluation and co-produce a commentary piece which represents the final output of the course. The sessions are delivered online and are made available on the ARC NWC YouTube channel, allowing participants to watch their content when it is most suitable to them. A Microsoft Teams space is also provided to enable full access to the course's materials and allow interaction with the other participants.

Before the course starts, the participants are divided in teams (each led by a team lead with expertise in health economics) according to their topics of interest. After the first session, the participants shortlist published economic evaluations' articles, and one is then chosen as the basis for the work that will be undertaken during the course. Each article is used as a vehicle to learn more about the mechanisms of health economic evaluations.

After each session participants are asked to extract information from their team's article around the reported methods and results which will then be used by the team leads to write up specific sections of the commentary piece. At the final workshop the participants, together with the team leads, critically appraise their team's economic evaluation. They also co-develop considerations around the potential implications of a wider implementation of the health or social care intervention investigated in the article building upon the cost-effectiveness results. Research gaps are identified as well. These discussions from the workshop inform the writing up of the commentary pieces which are co-produced by the participants with the team leads.



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NEXT STEPS

- Continue collecting and analysing feedback from RaCEEs participants
- Undertake follow-up interviews with participants from later cohorts
- Track longer-term outcomes, including further publications, funding grants and other research activity
- Support participants to disseminate commentary outputs within their organisations
- Use learning from previous RaCEEs feedback to refine the course's future content and delivery
- Explore opportunities to scale up the programme to additional cohorts
- Share the RaCEEs model across ARC NWC themes and partner organisations
- Contribute learning to wider NIHR capacity building discussions

Twelve commentaries of existing economic evaluations have been co-produced (or are being finalised) so far, with two already published and another two accepted for publication by academic journals.

Post-course surveys have reported a marked increase in the perceived knowledge in the methods and interpretation of health economic evaluations on the part of the participants. Notably, interviews with past participants have demonstrated that the RaCEEs course has produced key impacts in different ways by:

- Enhancing ability to conduct literature searches and evaluate economic evidence;
- Increasing confidence in reviewing research proposals, particularly in assessing economic arguments, and discussing funding and value in healthcare decisions;
- Increasing confidence in applying economic evaluation methods across healthcare projects, strengthening the quality and rigour of ongoing evaluations;
- Improving ability to critically interpret economic evaluations, especially regarding bias, value, and cost-effectiveness;
- Championing the value of accessible economic literacy for all staff in health and care roles, not just leadership;
- Strengthening funding applications by integrating economic evaluations to justify costs;
- Improving research capacity in social work by helping practitioners engage with economic principles;
- Increasing confidence in challenging and shaping social care policies.

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