

Study Guide: HIA: Assessment Introduction

Issues and Questions

On Thursday we will continue to discuss HIA implementation. Readings assigned include pieces on assessment practices, the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, and how to address the shortfalls of HIA.

Bhatia's *Health Impact Assessment: A Guide for Practice* asserts that assessment produces three related outputs: (1) assessment of the baseline conditions of the affected population; (2) anticipated health effects of alternative decisions; and (3) evaluation of certain health effects described. **Bhatia** identifies a number of helpful resources for conducting HIAs. **Kemm's *Health Impact Assessment: Past Achievement, Current Understanding, and Future Progress***, chapters 3 and 4, discusses the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. Both methods make important contributions, but researchers conducting HIAs should know the benefits and weakness of each to be able to choose the most appropriate method.

The **National Research Council (US) Committee on Health Impact Assessment's *Improving Health in the US: the role of HIA*** acknowledges the strong potential of HIA to enact policy change but cautions against overselling the precision or certainty of estimated health effects. To address limitations, three strategies are suggested: (1) using diverse evidence sources; (2) assessing the quality of available evidence; and (3) having a strategy for assessing and managing uncertainty.

Lastly, the **Human Impact Partners' *Rapid Health Impact Assessment of the Proposed Farmers Field Development*** provides an example of an HIA used to advocate for health conscious development. **Human Impact Partners** is a research, advocacy, and capacity building organization that works with local groups and public agencies interested in understanding the effects of various projects and policies on community health. The assigned reading is a final report analyzing the health effects of the farmer field development in Los Angeles, CA, with recommendations on how to improve community health and mitigate the possible negative effects of the proposed development.

Questions

1. What types of evidence and methods does Bhatia list are commonly used in HIA?
2. According to Kemm, what is a dose response curve? How is it used in quantitative methods? When does this model fall short? Following this train of thought, what does the National Research Council suggest are some of the benefits of quantitative estimates of health? What are some of the drawbacks?
3. According to the National Research Council and Kemm, why is it beneficial to involve stakeholders



in the HIA process? What are some methods for engaging community members?

4. How can we deal with uncertainty in data? Why are multidisciplinary approaches useful for conducting HIAs? Does *Rapid Health Impact Assessment of the Proposed Farmers Field Development* include any of these approaches?

Key Terms

Civic/Lay Knowledge

Epidemiology

Dose–Response Curve

Non-Participatory HIA

Consultative HIA

Participatory HIA

Community HIA

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

11.S941 Healthy Cities: Assessing Health Impacts of Policies and Plans
Spring 2016

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.