Health economics is increasingly relevant to both public health practice and practitioners. However, the area can appear full of incomprehensible jargon and inaccessible scientific debate. It can also be difficult to know where to start to look for information on costs and the cost-effectiveness of health interventions.

A first port of call will always be a search of the published literature using a bibliographic database. It is also worth searching the National Health Service (NHS) Economic Evaluation Database (EED), available on the Cochrane Library or direct from the University of York.

In addition to the published literature, economic evaluations are often conducted as part of a health technology assessment for local, regional, and national governments. Also, a number of academic health economics centres perform and/or critically appraise economic evaluations of technologies considered by government bodies such as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) and the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) in Australia, or the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the United Kingdom. Most of these groups make their reports available online, and several produce guidelines that are useful reminders of approaches to economic evaluation and critical appraisal.

The websites of academic centres for health economics are also a source of information on work-in-progress and on areas of specialisation of individual health economists. For example, while there may not have been an economic evaluation conducted of the latest drug treatment for obesity, there may be a health economist who has conducted work in that area.

If all this fails, contact your local health economics centre and ask for advice.

HEALTH ECONOMICS CENTRES

Australia
Centre for Health Program Evaluation
chpe.buseco.monash.edu.au
Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation
www.chere.uts.edu.au
Social and Public Health Economics Research Group
www.curtin.edu.au/health/research/sphere

Overseas (English language)
International Health Economics Association
www.healtheconomics.org
Centre for Health Economics, University of York
www.york.ac.uk/inst/che
Health Economics Research Unit, University of Aberdeen
www.adbn.ac.uk/heru
Health Economics Research Centre, University of Oxford:
www.ihs.ox.ac.uk/herc
Sheffield Health Economics Group
www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/R-Z/sheg
Health Economics Research Group, Brunel University
www.brunel.ac.uk/depts/herg
Health Economics Facility, University of Birmingham
www.hsmc.bham.ac.uk/hsmc
Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, McMaster University
www.chepa.org
Centre for Health and Policy Studies, University of Calgary
www.chaps.ucalgary.ca

HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

The Cochrane Collaboration
www.cochrane.org; www.cochrane.org.au
The Campbell Collaboration
www.campbellcollaboration.org
The Guide to Community Preventive Services
www.thecommunityguide.org

Australia
Australian Department of Health and Ageing
www.health.gov.au
Guidelines for evaluation for PBAC and MSAC reports

Canada
The Canadian Coordinating Office for Health Technology Assessment
www.ccohta.ca

United Kingdom
The National Institute for Clinical Excellence
www.nice.org.uk
These reports are also published by the NHS Health Technology Assessment Centre
www.ncchta.org

Further reviews, and an alternative source of the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (DARE) and NHS EED databases found on the Cochrane Library, can be found at the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD). This unit has also published guidelines for health technology assessment (CRD Report 4)
www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd

OTHER HEALTH ECONOMICS RESOURCES

More general collections of internet resources on health economics can be found at:
www.med econ.de/hec.htm
www.healtheconomics.com

Finally, anyone with more than a passing interest in health economics may want to join one of the existing email discussion lists. The main list is organised by Bruce Hollingsworth at Monash University and details are available at:
www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/health econ-discuss.html