



REVIEW

1 Cost-effectiveness of precision medicine: a scoping review

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5 Abstract

6 **Objectives** Precision medicine (PM) aims to improve patient outcomes by stratifying or individualizing diagnosis and
7 treatment decisions. Previous reviews found inconclusive evidence as to the cost-effectiveness of PM. The purpose of this
8 scoping review was to describe current research findings on the cost-effectiveness of PM and to identify characteristics of
9 cost-effective interventions.

10 **Methods** We searched PubMed with a combination of terms related to PM and economic evaluations and included studies
11 published between 2014 and 2017.

12 **Results** A total of 83 articles were included, of which two-thirds were published in Europe and the USA. The majority of
13 studies concluded that the PM intervention was at least cost-effective compared to usual care. However, the willingness-to-
14 pay thresholds varied widely. Key factors influencing cost-effectiveness included the prevalence of the genetic condition in
15 the target population, costs of genetic testing and companion treatment and the probability of complications or mortality.

16 **Conclusions** This review may help inform decisions about reimbursement, research and development of PM interventions.
17

18 **Keywords** Precision medicine · Economic evaluation · Scoping review

19 Introduction

20
21 Over the last several decades, a gradual shift toward
22 patient-centered healthcare opened the door for individu-
23 alized approaches to diagnostics and treatment. Precision
24 medicine (PM) provides “timely and cost-effective

25 medical solutions to stratified patient subpopulations with 25
26 predictable outcome margins” (Akhmetov and Bubnov 26
27 2015). The European Union’s Horizon 2020 Advisory 27
28 Group defines PM as the “characterization of individuals’ 28
29 phenotypes and genotypes (e.g., molecular profiling, 29
30 medical imaging and lifestyle data) for tailoring the right 30
31 therapeutic strategy for the right person at the right time, 31
32 and/or to determine the predisposition to disease and/or 32
33 to deliver timely and targeted prevention” (European Com- 33
34 mission 2013; Nimmegern et al. 2017). 34

35 Nowadays, PM interventions consist mostly of genetic 35
36 profiling, including the detection of predictive biomarkers. 36
37 These can identify patients at risk for a specific disease or a 37
38 severe variant of a disease and allow for preventive inter- 38
39 ventions to reduce the burden of diseases and improve 39
40 quality of life. Predictive biomarkers can also identify 40
41 patients who will benefit most from certain treatments 41
42 (Waldman and Terzic 2008). Furthermore, the detection of 42
43 germline variations such as drug-metabolizing enzymes 43
44 can help identify individuals at greater risk of adverse 44
45 events or who would benefit most from dose adjustments to 45
46 optimize safety (Shabaruddin et al. 2015; Waldman and 46
47 Terzic 2008). Today, there are over 54,000 diagnostic tests 47
48 available for over 16,400 genes (NCBI. GTR: genetic 48
49 testing registry 2017). PM has the potential to reduce costs 49

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A10 tains supplementary material, which is available to autho-
A11 rized users.

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50 associated with inappropriate, often expensive pharmaco-
51 logical treatments, as well as hospitalizations for serious
52 adverse drug reactions (Berm et al. 2016), and could ulti-
53 mately allow for a more effective use of healthcare
54 resources (Shabaruddin et al. 2015).

55 The cost-effectiveness of targeted interventions depends
56 on many factors, such as the prevalence of a certain gene or
57 allele in a population, the accuracy of a test and the costs of
58 testing and personalized treatment (Hatz et al. 2014). As a
59 result, patient outcomes may improve, and however, the
60 cost-effectiveness of PM remains unclear. Recently,
61 experts have suggested a value-based approach to PM
62 (Patrinos and Mitropoulou 2017; Shabaruddin et al. 2015).
63 This means measuring the value of PM interventions and
64 demonstrating their cost-effectiveness to inform policy
65 decisions about reimbursement and investment in research
66 and development, particularly in solidarity-based health
67 systems.

68 Economic evaluations

69 Economic evaluations “identify, measure, value and com-
70 pare the benefits to the costs of the alternatives being
71 considered” (Drummond et al. 2015), both in terms of cost
72 and outcomes, and combine them in analytical models to
73 determine the cost per quality-adjusted life year (QALY)
74 gained through a specific intervention compared with a
75 standard of care (Terkola et al. 2017). In other words, a
76 cost-effectiveness analysis evaluates if the improvement in
77 clinical outcomes that an intervention provides is enough to
78 justify the additional amount of money spent on it. It does
79 not determine if an intervention reduces cost, but it tells us
80 which intervention provides better value for the same
81 amount of money spent (Institute of Medicine 2013). As
82 explained in the proceedings of a workshop held by the
83 Institute of Medicine (2013) “the best result is when out-
84 comes improve and costs go down. The worst is when
85 outcomes become worse and costs increase. Most (PM)
86 interventions in healthcare result in higher costs with
87 improved outcomes”.

88 Another important point to consider is the perspective
89 adopted by different economic analyses. The models can
90 incorporate data ranging from clinical to financial and
91 humanistic, and include direct and indirect costs. The type
92 of cost data included depends on the perspective adopted
93 by the study (Lieberthal 2013). A payer perspective usually
94 determines cost-effectiveness by comparing cost per qual-
95 ity-adjusted life year (QALY) gained, with a currently
96 accepted threshold of “willingness-to-pay”. Studies
97 adopting a societal perspective further include opportunity
98 costs, such as out-of-pocket patient costs, other indirect
99 medical costs, but also loss of income or productivity
100 (Lieberthal 2013).

Previous systematic reviews

102 In the past ten years, several systematic reviews of eco-
103 nomic evaluations of PM and pharmacogenomics have
104 been published (Berm et al. 2016; D’Andrea et al. 2015;
105 Grosse 2015; Hatz et al. 2014; Plumpton et al. 2016; Rosso
106 et al. 2017; Verbelen et al. 2017). Each generally examined
107 a narrow field of PM: Verbelen or Plöthner (Plöthner et al.
108 2016; Verbelen et al. 2017), for instance, looked at phar-
109 macogenetic guided treatment, whereas Rosso, Grosse or
110 Buchanan examined specific diseases or risk factors (e.g.,
111 hypercholesteremia) (Buchanan et al. 2017; Grosse 2015;
112 Rosso et al. 2017) or adverse drug reactions in the case of
113 Plumpton (Plumpton et al. 2016).

114 Most previous systematic reviews found inconclusive
115 evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness of PM, mainly due
116 to the insufficient quality of the studies included. The main
117 points of criticism in this regard were inadequate sensitivity
118 analyses, generally poor methodology, inconsistencies due
119 to a lack of clinical evidence and low quality of data used to
120 populate economic models, as well as heterogeneity
121 between study designs, models and populations (Berm et al.
122 2016; Hatz et al. 2014; Phillips et al. 2014; Ross et al. 2012;
123 Vegter et al. 2010). Nonetheless, a recent study reported an
124 improvement in the quality of economic evaluations over the
125 last few years (Shabaruddin et al. 2015). Another recom-
126 mendation from previous reviews was to identify which
127 factors influence the cost-effectiveness of PM interventions
128 (Hatz et al. 2014). A scoping review of economic evalua-
129 tions of PM could, therefore, help identify common factors
130 and strategies for an increasingly efficient application of
131 PM, across all fields of PM.

Aim and research question

132 Our aim was to describe current research findings on the
133 cost-effectiveness of PM and to identify characteristics of
134 better cost-effectiveness. Specifically, we aimed to answer
135 the following questions:
136

- 137 1. What is known from existing literature about the cost-
138 effectiveness of PM?
- 139 2. Which factors influence the cost-effectiveness of PM?

Methods

140 A scoping review aims to describe, summarize and facili-
141 tate dissemination of research findings. Scoping reviews
142 provide a narrative and descriptive account of available
143 research (Arksey and O’Malley 2005). For this scoping
144 review, we applied the following definition of precision
145 medicine: “clinical, therapeutic and diagnostic approaches
146 to optimal disease management based on individual
147

148 variations in a patient’s genetic profile” (U.S. National
 149 Library of Medicine 2017). PRISMA guidelines were
 150 adhered to where applicable (Moher et al. 2009).

151 **Search criteria**

152 We used a combination of search terms based on previous
 153 reviews and aligned with the definition of PM used for this
 154 study, aiming to capture a broad range of results (Berm
 155 et al. 2016; Hatz et al. 2014; Plumpton et al. 2016; Wong
 156 et al. 2010). Keywords such as “personalized medicine”,
 157 “precision medicine” and “pharmacogenomics” were
 158 combined with search terms related to economic evaluations
 159 (Fig. 1). PubMed was chosen for the search, as it
 160 indexes the largest number of journals relevant to PM
 161 (Cesuroglu et al. 2016).

162 **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

163 In the interest of time efficiency, we only included studies
 164 published after January 2014. Several systematic reviews
 165 have been published, which include pre-2014 articles. Also,
 166 by excluding older studies, which have often been reported to
 167 lack quality (Shabaruddin et al. 2015; Wong et al. 2010), we
 168 hoped to maximize the quality of the studies included.

169 Further, in our initial literature search, not limited in
 170 time, it became evident that over half of the studies were
 171 published after 2014. As a scoping review aims to capture
 172 the broadest range of studies, and considering that the
 173 systematic review using the most similar range (if not the
 174 method), included studies up to 2013 (Hatz et al. 2014), we
 175 settled on studies published after January 2014.

176 Studies were included if they were published between
 177 January 2014 and November 2017, from a field of PM as
 178 defined for this review, evaluating economic outcomes,
 179 written in English, French or German, and full text was
 180 accessible. Articles were first screened on the title. If the
 181 title was not informative enough to form a decision with
 182 respect to these criteria, abstracts were assessed. Additional
 183 articles were identified through reference tracking.

Data extraction

184

185 From the selected studies, the following data were
 186 extracted: (I) year of publication, (II) type disease or
 187 medical condition, (III) country, (IV) characteristics of
 188 economic analysis (type, perspective, ICER, WTP thresh-
 189 old applied, whenever this information was available),
 190 (V) results, (VI) conclusion of the authors, (VII) spon-
 191 sorship and/or declared conflict of interest and (VIII) factors
 192 influencing cost-effectiveness (see Online Resource 1). For
 193 interpretation of the outcome measure (i.e., cost-effec-
 194 tiveness), the conclusions as reported by the authors were
 195 used (see Online Resource 1). Two reviewers collaborated,
 196 and any disagreement was resolved in consensus.

Results

197

198 From over 1900 results in the initial PubMed search
 199 combined with a manual reference search, a total of 83
 200 studies were selected (see Online Resource 1 for full list).
 201 Reasons for exclusion were articles not concerned with PM
 202 as defined for this review; “opinion” articles; no economic
 203 analysis or absence of comparator; discussion of economic
 204 models/R&D only; and publication date before January
 205 2014 and duplicates (Fig. 2).

General characteristics

206

Geographical distribution

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208 Since 2014, most economic evaluations of PM have been
 209 conducted in Europe and North America, with a slightly
 210 higher number in Europe (31%) (Table 1).

Disease type

211

212 The most frequent PM interventions included in this review
 213 related to cancer (43% of studies, *N* = 36) and cardiovas-
 214 cular diseases (28% of studies, *N* = 23) and adverse drug

Search Strategy	
("Precision Medicine"[MeSH Terms] OR "Genomic Medicine"[All Fields] OR "Genetic Medicine"[All Fields] OR "Pharmacogenomics"[All Fields] OR "Pharmacogenetics"[MeSH Terms] OR "Personalized Medicine"[All Fields] OR "Individualized Medicine"[All Fields] OR "Genotype"[All Fields] OR "Genetic screening"[All Fields] OR "Genetic testing"[All Fields]) AND ("Economic Evaluation"[All Fields] OR "Cost-benefit analysis"[MeSH Terms] OR "Cost-effectiveness"[All Fields] OR "Cost-utility"[All Fields] OR "Value for money"[All Fields] OR "Economic Efficiency"[All Fields] OR "Cost-minimization"[All Fields] OR "Economic**"[All Fields] OR "Pharmacoeconomic**"[All Fields])	

Fig. 1 Search strategy

Fig. 2 PRISMA flowchart showing the number of studies at each stage of the review process

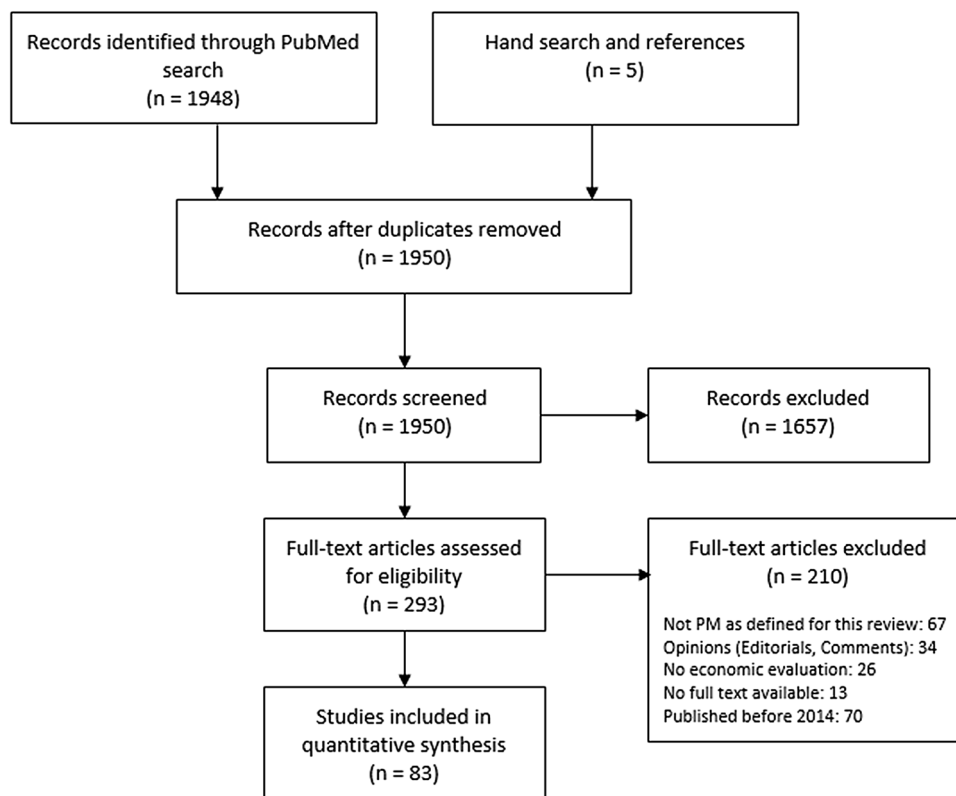


Table 1 General characteristics of included studies

Geographical distribution	<i>N</i>	% of total (<i>N</i> = 83)
Total Europe	26	31
Total Asia and Oceania	16	19
Total North America	23	28
Systematic reviews	13	16
n/a	5	6
Disease type	<i>N</i>	% of total (<i>N</i> = 83)
Cancer	36	43
Cardiovascular diseases	23	28
Adverse drug reaction	9	11
Systematic reviews covering several areas	4	5
Other (total)	11	13
Other: mental health	2	
Other: ophthalmic disease (macular degeneration)	1	
Other: autism	1	
Other: auto-immune diseases	3	
Other: MODY	2	
Other: HIV	1	
Other: asthma	1	

reactions (11% of studies, *N* = 9). Some other diseases were studied less frequently (13%, *N* = 11), and some systematic reviews covered several disease types (5% of studies, *N* = 4) (Table 1).

Genetic or pharmaceutical industry involvement

A total of 37% (*N* = 31) studies were either industry sponsored, or one or more authors were employed or financially supported by either pharmaceutical industry or industry involved in genetic testing or other areas of personalized medicine (see Online Resource 1).

Economic characteristics

Type of economic analyses

Of the 83 studies included, 75% (*N* = 62) were cost-effectiveness analyses and 5% (*N* = 4) were cost-utility studies (Table 2). The remaining 20% (*N* = 17) used different methods, cost calculations or were systematic reviews.

Perspective

As seen in Table 2, around one-fifth (13%, *N* = 11) of the included studies did not provide information on the

Table 2 Economic characteristics of included studies

Type of analysis	<i>N</i>	% of total (<i>N</i> = 83)
Cost-effectiveness analysis	62	75
Cost-utility analysis	4	5
Other	17	20
Conclusion of authors on cost-effectiveness		
Cost saving	2	2
Cost-effective	57	69
Inconclusive	9	11
Not cost-effective	14	17
n/a	1	1
Perspective of economic evaluations		
Missing	11	13
n/a (SystRev or other)	16	19
Payer	20	24
Healthcare system	23	28
Societal	7	8
Healthcare system and societal	5	6
Societal and payer	1	1

235 perspective chosen. Another 19% (*N* = 16) were system-
 236 atic reviews or other types of review articles. The
 237 remaining studies provided information on perspective, of
 238 which 24% (*N* = 20) adopted a payer’s perspective, 28%
 239 (*N* = 23) used the perspective of the healthcare system and
 240 8% (*N* = 7) took a societal perspective. Six percent of the
 241 studies (*N* = 5) conducted the evaluation from both a
 242 healthcare system and societal perspective, and 1% (*N* = 1)
 243 used a payer and societal perspective.

244 **Cost-effectiveness: conclusion of authors**

245 A large majority of studies (*N* = 59) conclude that the PM
 246 intervention is at least cost-effective compared to usual
 247 care (see Table 2). However, the applied willingness-to-
 248 pay thresholds vary widely, from USD 20,000/QALY,
 249 mainly in studies from the UK or Europe, to USD 200,000/
 250 QALY in studies conducted in the USA. This means that a
 251 PM intervention considered cost-effective in the USA
 252 would not necessarily fulfill the criteria to be considered so
 253 in Europe, as the amount of money per QALY, a society is
 254 willing to spend is variable.

255 **Factors influencing cost-effectiveness**

256 One of the main limitations cited by authors was the
 257 insufficient quality of the data used to populate the models.

Similarly, all systematic reviews report the difficulty to
 compare different economic analyses due to methodologi-
 cal inconsistencies and the heterogeneity of data included
 in the models. Nevertheless, similarly to others before us
 (Ademi et al. 2017), we noted that there were key factors
 that influenced the cost-effectiveness of PM. Out of all
 studies, 53 studies found that one or more factors influ-
 enced the cost-effectiveness of PM in their models
 (Table 3). The main factors, which influence cost-effec-
 tiveness, were found to be the prevalence of the genetic
 “condition” in the target population, costs of genetic
 testing and companion treatment and the probability of
 complications or mortality.

Prevalence of the “allele” or “mutation” in the population tested

The prevalence of an allele of interest influences the posi-
 tive predictive value of the genetic test (Ademi et al. 2017;
 Alagoz et al. 2016; D’Andrea et al. 2016; Gonzalez et al.
 2015; Grosse 2015; Ke et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2014; Moretti
 et al. 2017; Naylor et al. 2014; Plothner et al. 2016; Ruiz-
 Iruela et al. 2016; Snowsill et al. 2017). This, therefore,
 increases the effectiveness of “cascade” screening pro-
 grams where, for example, an individual is identified by
 clinical prescreening as having an increased risk of having
 the allele/mutation (Ademi et al. 2014; Lazaro et al. 2017).

Probability of complications

A higher probability of complications (including mortality)
 will decrease the cost-effectiveness of a PM intervention
 (Alagoz et al. 2016; Chong et al. 2014; Gonzalez et al.
 2015; Jahn et al. 2015, 2017; Ke et al. 2017; Moretti et al.
 2017; Pink et al. 2014; Plumpton et al. 2015; Saokaew
 et al. 2014; Schremser et al. 2015; Snowsill et al. 2017) by
 decreasing the number of life years gained. For the same
 reason, factors such as age at testing (Buchanan et al. 2017;
 Green et al. 2014; Jahn et al. 2015; Manchanda et al. 2015),
 as well as the stage of the disease (Schremser et al. 2015),
 will have the same effect. A person with end-stage meta-
 static cancer might still benefit from a PM intervention, but
 the cost-effectiveness ratio will be much lower, as the
 potential benefit is smaller. Therefore, it is more cost-ef-
 fective to identify a risk or a susceptibility to a specific
 treatment in a younger person and/or at an earlier stage of
 disease.

Cost of genetic testing

Another factor identified in our review as a barrier to cost-
 effectiveness of PM interventions is the high cost of some
 genetic tests (Ademi et al. 2017; Alagoz et al. 2016; Chong

Table 3 Factors influencing cost-effectiveness*Prevalence of “allele” in population*

Ademi et al. (2017), Alagoz et al. (2016), Barzi et al. (2015), Chen et al. (2016), D’Andrea et al. (2015, 2016), Dong et al. (2015), Gallego et al. (2015), Gonzalez et al. (2015), Grosse (2015), Ke et al. (2017), Lee et al. (2014), Moretti et al. (2017), Naylor et al. (2014), Nguyen et al. (2017), Patel et al. (2014), Plothner et al. (2016), Ruiz-Iruela et al. (2016) and Snowsill et al. (2017)

Probability of complications (incl. mortality)

Alagoz et al. (2016), Chong et al. (2014), Gallego et al. (2015), Gonzalez et al. (2015), Goverde et al. (2016), Jahn et al. (2015, 2017), Ke et al. (2017), Li et al. (2017), Moretti et al. (2017), Patel et al. (2014), Pink et al. (2014), Plumpton et al. (2015), Saokaew et al. (2014), Schremser et al. (2015), Snowsill et al. (2017) and You (2014)

Cost of genetic testing

Ademi et al. (2017), Alagoz et al. (2016), Barzi et al. (2015), Chong et al. (2014), D’Andrea et al. (2016), Dong et al. (2015), Green et al. (2014), Grosse (2015), Li et al. (2017), Martes-Martinez et al. (2017), Naylor et al. (2014), Nguyen et al. (2017), Plothner et al. (2016), Rubio-Terres et al. (2015), Snowsill et al. (2017), Wang et al. (2017) and Snowsill et al. (2015)

Cost of companion treatment

Buchanan et al. (2017), Gallego et al. (2015), Horster et al. (2017), Jahn et al. (2015), Lim et al. (2016), Lu et al. (2016), Narita et al. (2015), Patel et al. (2014), Ruiz-Iruela et al. (2016), Schackman et al. (2015), Yamauchi et al. (2014), You (2014, 2015) and Wallbillich et al. (2016)

Age at testing, stage of disease

Buchanan et al. (2017), Green et al. (2014), Jahn et al. (2015), Manchanda et al. (2015), Schremser et al. (2015) and Yamauchi et al. (2014)

Effectiveness of test (accuracy)

Martes-Martinez et al. (2017), Plothner et al. (2016) and Snowsill et al. (2017)

Other (utility/quality of life (QoL) after preventive treatment, patient adherence to treatment, uptake of genetic testing, impact of genetic testing on QoL)

Balentine et al. (2017), Green et al. (2014), Lu et al. (2016), Martes-Martinez et al. (2017), Plothner et al. (2016), Shiffman et al. (2015), Snowsill et al. (2014, 2015, 2017), Verhoef et al. (2016) and Plumpton et al. (2016)

305 et al. 2014; Green et al. 2014; Grosse 2015; Martes-Mar-
306 tinez et al. 2017; Naylor et al. 2014; Nguyen et al. 2017;
307 Plothner et al. 2016; Rubio-Terres et al. 2015; Wang et al.
308 2017). However, it has been observed that the cost of
309 genetic testing has been decreasing and is expected to
310 continue to do so in the future (National Institute of Health
311 NIH 2016).

312 The cost of treatment, if the treatment is a “companion”
313 treatment, also influences the cost-effectiveness of PM
314 (Buchanan et al. 2017; Horster et al. 2017; Jahn et al. 2015;
315 Lim et al. 2016; Ruiz-Iruela et al. 2016). A companion
316 treatment is marketed together with a specific genetic test.
317 This is particularly relevant in oncology, where cancer
318 “companion” treatments can have a very high cost.

319 Accuracy of the genetic test

320 Some studies included in our scoping review noted that the
321 accuracy of a genetic test can influence the cost-effec-
322 tiveness of PM (Martes-Martinez et al. 2017; Plothner et al.
323 2016; Snowsill et al. 2017). Indeed, sensitivity and speci-
324 ficity can play an important role in the cost-effectiveness of
325 testing, as do the cost of false-positive or false-negative
326 results and the unnecessary treatments and/or mortality and
327 morbidity associated with them.

Other factors

328
329 Finally, factors such as the health-related quality of life
330 (HRQoL) during and after a preventive treatment, the
331 timeframe when a risk factor was identified, patient
332 adherence to treatment, the uptake of genetic testing in si-
333 tuations of hereditary risk factors and the impact of genetic
334 testing on HRQoL were also identified as having a poten-
335 tial impact on the cost-effectiveness of PM (Balentine et al.
336 2017; Green et al. 2014; Martes-Martinez et al. 2017;
337 Plothner et al. 2016; Shiffman et al. 2015; Snowsill et al.
338 2017; Verhoef et al. 2016). Most of these factors have been
339 previously identified, and our findings reinforce results
340 from previous reviews (Beaulieu et al. 2010; Berm et al.
341 2016; Ferrusi et al. 2009; Goldie and Levin 2001; Husereau
342 et al. 2014; Institute of Medicine 2013; Veenstra et al.
343 2000).

Discussion

344
345 This study aimed to describe previous research findings on
346 the cost-effectiveness of PM and to identify factors that
347 influence the cost-effectiveness of PM. This scoping
348 review described 83 studies relevant to economic evalua-
349 tions and cost-effectiveness of a broad range of precision
350 medicine interventions. Whereas most previous reviews

351 found an overwhelming majority of studies originating
 352 from the USA (Hatz et al. 2014), we found that, since 2014,
 353 most economic evaluations of PM have been conducted in
 354 Europe and North America, with a slightly higher number
 355 in Europe (31%).

356 **Perspectives**

357 In the most recent literature, there seems to be a move
 358 away from cost and toward a focus on value. Measuring the
 359 value of PM is urgently needed (Terkola et al. 2017).
 360 However, the classic economic principles—association
 361 between cost and benefits are not easily measurable in
 362 health care. Until recently, patients were not able to choose
 363 what kind of healthcare they received, nor did they pay out
 364 of their own pocket (Institute of Medicine 2013). Within
 365 privatized health insurance systems, however, patients
 366 must assume out-of-pocket costs depending on their
 367 deductible or may decide to cover a treatment that is not
 368 validated and therefore not reimbursed by their insurance.
 369 Further, patients as healthcare consumers are more aware
 370 of the options available for specific treatments or inter-
 371 ventions, as well as potential harm and benefits of an
 372 intervention.

373 Some authors argue that current health economics
 374 approaches are limited, as they do not fully capture the
 375 different perspectives of value in health (Grosse et al.
 376 2008; Institute of Medicine 2013; Terkola et al. 2017). The
 377 conversation around different financing options in health-
 378 care, including personalized medicine, is ongoing.

379 Furthermore, the comparison baseline has changed.
 380 Whereas previously the comparison was between “genetic
 381 testing” and “no testing”, nowadays usual care already
 382 includes testing. For example, as Berm et al. (2016)
 383 describe KRAS testing before treatment with cetuximab in
 384 colorectal cancer, it was compared to no testing before
 385 treatment. Testing before treatment was found to be
 386 superior and was included in clinical guidelines, de facto
 387 becoming the new “usual” care. Thereafter, new treatment
 388 options will be compared to the combination of KRAS
 389 testing before cetuximab administration (Berm et al. 2016).

390 **Challenges for economic evaluations in precision
 391 medicine**

392 Many challenges for economic evaluations in PM have
 393 previously been described (Faulkner et al. 2012; Hatz et al.
 394 2014; Terkola et al. 2017). Economic models have signif-
 395 icant limitations compared with clinical trials. Data from
 396 clinical trials, which are usually extrapolated to populate
 397 the models, may not be transferable into a real-world set-
 398 ting (Lieberthal 2013). Further, the increasing complexity
 399 of PM interventions, such as sequential or cascade testing,

which is reflected in the models, results in a higher level of 400
 uncertainty about the incremental cost-effectiveness ratio 401
 (ICER) (Terkola et al. 2017). 402

Lack of data 403

There is still a lack of clinical evidence to support PM 404
 technologies, particularly of “real-world” data on clinical 405
 utility, which is not model based or derived from selective 406
 trials (Akhmetov and Bubnov 2015; Berm et al. 2016; 407
 Brüggjenjürgen et al. 2012; Phillips et al. 2014; Terkola 408
 et al. 2017). There is an even larger uncertainty with 409
 pharmacogenomic tests, since they have no direct influence 410
 on patient outcomes, as they do not treat patients directly, 411
 but rather improve a clinician’s decisions about treatment 412
 (Akhmetov and Bubnov 2015). 413

As with clinical data, there is a lack of real-world cost 414
 data, and of data where opportunity costs are reflected (e.g., 415
 the costs for genetic counseling and the costs of ambiguous 416
 test results) (Conti et al. 2010). 417

Besides this, several authors have raised the issue of cost 418
 for testing inaccuracies (Conti et al. 2010; Goldie and 419
 Levin 2001; Terkola et al. 2017). It is argued that for a 420
 cost-effectiveness analysis to be useful to inform policies, 421
 it should include all clinical and economical events trig- 422
 gered by the test results, such as the cost of false-positive 423
 and false-negative results. In an example explained by 424
 Goldie (Goldie and Levin 2001), for a woman who tests 425
 positive for the BRCA-1 mutation but is not destined to 426
 develop breast cancer (estimated at 30%), the benefits of a 427
 prophylactic mastectomy would be negligible but she 428
 would still bear the huge costs of the psychological anxiety 429
 and healthcare resources associated with lifelong 430
 screening. 431

“Willingness-to-pay” thresholds 432

As our review demonstrates, there is no consensus on a 433
 willingness-to-pay threshold for a quality-adjusted life year 434
 gained. In the USA, the most commonly used willingness- 435
 to-pay threshold is 50,000 USD per QALY, historically 436
 based on the cost-effectiveness of dialysis from the 1970s, 437
 whereas currently, the cost-effectiveness ratio of dialysis is 438
 130,000 USD per QALY (Coate and Leighl 2011). WHO 439
 recommends a willingness-to-pay threshold of 3 times the 440
 GDP of the country. This threshold, however, was only 441
 applied in 3 out of 83 studies included in this scoping 442
 review (Brown et al. 2015; Horster et al. 2017; Schremser 443
 et al. 2015). It also has been noted that QALYs lack the 444
 ability to fully capture all aspects of health outcomes 445
 (Garrison et al. 2017; Terkola et al. 2017). 446

447 **Limitations of this study**

448 This scoping review has several limitations. First, we only
449 searched one database, which reduces the potential breadth
450 and depth of the results. Second, the chosen definition of
451 PM (narrower, e.g., no lifestyle, nor prenatal diagnostics
452 included) and search terms (searching for articles identified
453 as “personalized” or “precision” medicine) did not include
454 all individual genetic tests. This has the potential to limit
455 the scope of the results.

456 **Conclusion**

457 PM interventions have been increasingly useful for
458 screening, testing and treatment of many diseases. Due to
459 the many factors which influence cost-effectiveness and the
460 varied thresholds of willingness-to-pay applied, the cost-
461 effectiveness of PM remains unclear. Therefore, we might
462 require a different approach to value precision medicine
463 interventions.

466 **Compliance with ethical standards**

467 **Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of
468 interest.

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