

Comments on:

Hunt and Ferguson,
A Review of Recent Policy-Relevant Findings
from the Environmental Health Literature

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Over Arching Comments

- Rich paper, takes on a lot of the literature, provides food for thought
- Treatment of uncertainty may need rebalancing
- Structure good, but could be better with some refining, particularly in Part I

Part II: Theoretical Underpinnings

- Great framework for structuring Part II

Total loss = Treatment cost + productivity loss + utility loss
as function of days ill

- How does theory deal with severity?
- Good place to discuss interaction between science and economics
- Application of framework varies by country
 - UK vs US

Cost of Illness

- Needs to be expanded
- How is productivity loss measured, particularly, how is expected work time lost estimated
- How are national differences in opportunity cost of labor reconciled
- How are national differences in medical costs estimated and reconciled.
- How does the literature deal with wage rate of non-market

WTP to reduce risk of illness

- move beyond problem identification to problem resolution
- expand range of endpoints. A table would be helpful.
- context – is it really intractable?
- How much difference is there in SP estimates of WTP as lost utility and WTP as total welfare impact of illness? Do warnings work?

Children's Health

- Table on children's morbidity valuation studies by health outcome
- Issues
 - Chronic probably greatest impact
 - estimates of productivity loss from mental and physical disability.
 - How could studies resolve evolution of disease treatment over child's lifetime, both CoI and WTP
 - Latent impacts particularly salient
 - Who speaks for the child
 - The parental "child premium" for morbidity
 - Transition from childhood to adulthood



Part I: Impact Assessment

- Needs more structure:
- Major points:
 - CBA is only as good as health impact measurements -- expand Table 1
 - Health valuation measures have multiple uses Different measures are needed for each
 - Green accounting – table of literature coverage by media
 - But health valuation measures aren't in fact actually relied on broadly. Why?
 - Valuation estimates are too uncertain and it costs too much to do new studies to reduce that uncertainty
 - Ethical reservations – including spatial transfer, discounting distant future
 - Ministries are used to using cost-effectiveness

Conclusions

- Rebalance approach to uncertainty
 - There is uncertainty in valuation, but is it worse than that in impact estimates?
- Move beyond issue identification to problem resolution
- More scoping of gaps – tables would be helpful
- Thank you! This is a significant undertaking.

Research Ideas

- How context dependent are health measures? Can we get health outcome valuation measures?
- What are data needs for assessment of productivity loss? How might these be filled?
- Are there cross-country differences in WTP to reduce morbidity risk and what explains them?