

# VALUE & OUTCOMES SPOTLIGHT

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



This issue of *Value & Outcomes Spotlight* comes on the heels of ISPOR's 20th Annual International Meeting in Philadelphia. More than 3,700 attendees enjoyed a wide ranging program of short courses, plenaries, issue panels, workshops, oral presentations, and posters—and on top of all that there was a nice video celebrating the history of our Society and ISPOR's own band, the Monte Carlos, rocked the house at the social event.

The meeting theme was *Integrating Big Data, Patient Data, and Cost-Effectiveness into Clinical Practice: Promise and Prospects*, and we carry that theme into this issue by featuring two articles on big data and how we analyze

it, both of which derive from a plenary session at last year's international meeting. The first seeks to address the question, "where are we now with big data and what does the future hold?" It provides an historical perspective on the use of real-world data to fuel health care decision making, distinguishing between 'descriptive', 'predictive', and 'prescriptive' data use cases, which correspond to the needs of characterizing current patterns, predicting future ones, and identifying levers in the health care system to bring about improvements. It argues that future developments will revolve around use of machine-based analytics to speed up data flows and provision of data-driven insights to those who are responsible for important health care decisions.

The second article picks up on the issue of the relationship between humans and computers, seeking to determine whether there remains a place for outcomes researchers in the era of machine-learning techniques. Fortunately for all of us, the answer is yes. According to the article, big health data are so messy, so riddled with missing values, and so spread out over multiple sources that even when machine-learning techniques are utilized it is necessary first to ensure that the machine-based algorithms are appropriately set up to understand these potholes and blind spots—and humans are needed for this task along with the follow-up work of making sense of the insights generated by the machines. This is summed up in a key point from the article: "It is not possible to put right with computational power what has been done wrong by study design."

In our ISPOR News section, we provide highlights from our 20th Annual International Meeting, including a photo spread and listing of research award recipients. We then turn our attention to the upcoming 5th Latin America Conference, which will take place in Santiago, Chile in September. A thought provoking piece by the meeting program co-chairs encourages us to consider the role of health technology assessment in reducing inequities in the health care system, which they point out are rampant throughout Latin America. The meeting plenaries will focus on this topic, but there are other compelling reasons to visit Chile as well, including opportunities to sample the local cuisine, take in the breathtaking landscape, and tour some of the nearby vineyards.

One final thought on our recent meeting in Philadelphia before closing. In addition to a great program, the main hall was packed with exhibitors showcasing their wares and opportunities for meeting colleagues in the field were plentiful. This aspect should not be underestimated, as ISPOR has become a networking extravaganza, undoubtedly the largest and most important in our field, a place to seek new jobs, new business, new connections. It's a vast sea of fish with no limits on the interactions—small fish to big, big fish to small, and everything in between—with the potential for meaningful connections on so many levels.

See you in Santiago!

David Thompson, PhD  
Editor-in-Chief, *Value & Outcomes Spotlight*

Tell us what you think of the new *Value & Outcomes Spotlight*! Send feedback to [vos@ispor.org](mailto:vos@ispor.org) or use the comments form at <http://www.ispor.org/ValueOutcomesSpotlight/CommentForm>