

## **PRESSE RELEASE**

### **Well-founded Evidence for Austrian Healthcare: Newly Established Institute Commences Operations**

The newly established Austrian Institute for Health Technology Assessment (AIHTA) GmbH will succeed the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Health Technology Assessment (LBI-HTA) and commence operations on 1 March 2020, taking on new responsibilities in the process. At the independent institute, 14 scientific staff members provide objective evidence to support societal and political decision-making in healthcare. In doing so, they make an important contribution to the efficient use of resources in this highly cost-intensive sector. Alongside the Austrian Social Insurance umbrella organisation, all provincial health funds and the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection are already supporting the Institute's work and are involved as shareholders. The official launch of the Institute will be celebrated on 25 February at a major ceremonial event attended by Austrian and international representatives from the healthcare sector.

**Vienna, February 2020 – At the end of September 2019, a study published in Vienna caused considerable discussion within the Austrian pharmaceutical sector. The study demonstrated that several high-priced medicines had been developed with substantial public research funding, thereby challenging the industry's argument that high prices are primarily driven by development costs. The study was authored by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Health Technology Assessment (LBI-HTA) in Vienna, which has now concluded its operations, as planned, after 14 years of successful activity.**

The newly established **Austrian Institute for Health Technology Assessment (AIHTA) GmbH** will seamlessly continue this work with a team of 14 scientific and four administrative staff members. The clear objective of the team, led by **Priv.-Doz. Dr Claudia Wild**, is to provide scientific decision support for healthcare policy and practice while also bringing uncomfortable but important evidence to the negotiating table when necessary.

#### **Objective, Critical and Evidence-Based**

"We are the largest provider of Health Technology Assessment in Austria," explains **Dr Claudia Wild**. "Our experience dates back to the 1990s, when Austria's first HTA working group was established at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. We provide objective, critical and scientifically robust evidence for policymakers, healthcare stakeholders and the wider public."

The range of services offered by the shareholder-funded institute is extensive. In the field of evidence-based assessment alone, the team provides early evaluations of newly authorised medicines, assessments to support hospital service catalogues and complex medical interventions, health economic evaluations, and the collection of real-world data for health services research.

A good example of AIHTA's work is a study published in 2019 by its predecessor organisation, LBI-HTA, which critically assessed the benefits of robot-assisted surgery, particularly in thoracic and abdominal procedures. Moving beyond the general enthusiasm surrounding the potential of robotics in healthcare, the study evaluated the scientific evidence on both the advantages and disadvantages of this specific application.

The conclusion was clear: relatively few benefits, high costs, and a still limited evidence base.

"These are precisely the types of data that are urgently needed for financially sustainable decision-making in an increasingly pressured healthcare system," says Dr Wild. "We are proud to continue the successful work of LBI-HTA as an independent organisation with its own legal status."

### **Cooperation and Career Development**

The Institute's Director is particularly keen to expand cooperation with clinicians working in Austrian hospitals.

For her, this represents a clear win-win situation:

"Health professionals are given the opportunity to establish a reputation in the field of Health Technology Assessment, which can be highly beneficial for career development, particularly in hospital environments that are increasingly focused on cost efficiency. In return, we gain access to data and practical experience from everyday clinical care, enabling analyses that are grounded in real-world practice."

The European significance of both AIHTA and Health Technology Assessment will be highlighted by the international guests attending the opening ceremony at the **ViennaBallhaus** on 25 February. Speakers from **Germany, Sweden and Norway**, together with representatives of all shareholders and the wider Austrian healthcare sector, will mark the transition from LBI-HTA to AIHTA in a festive yet informative setting.

A press briefing prior to the ceremony will provide journalists with an opportunity to speak personally with the Institute's Director, **Priv.-Doz. Dr Claudia Wild**.