son of marginal costs with incremental benefits for each shift in strategy. Focusing on each patient’s lifetime rather than on a given calendar year would highlight, among other things, uncertainties in the long-term side effects of use of a relatively new agent such as cimetidine.

The prototype decision tree shown in figure 4 (pp. 26-27) could serve as a starting point for such an analysis. At least one group of researchers, in Switzerland, has begun to take a decision-analytic approach to the lifetime consequences of duodenal ulcer treatments (137). Their published analysis is restricted to a specific 50-year-old male patient, and one might fault their figures for not discounting future costs and benefits, but these researchers do approach the problem in an appropriate way.

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