



Automating Health Economic Evaluation with R (+ genAI)

R-HTA 25 | Robert Smith | June 2025



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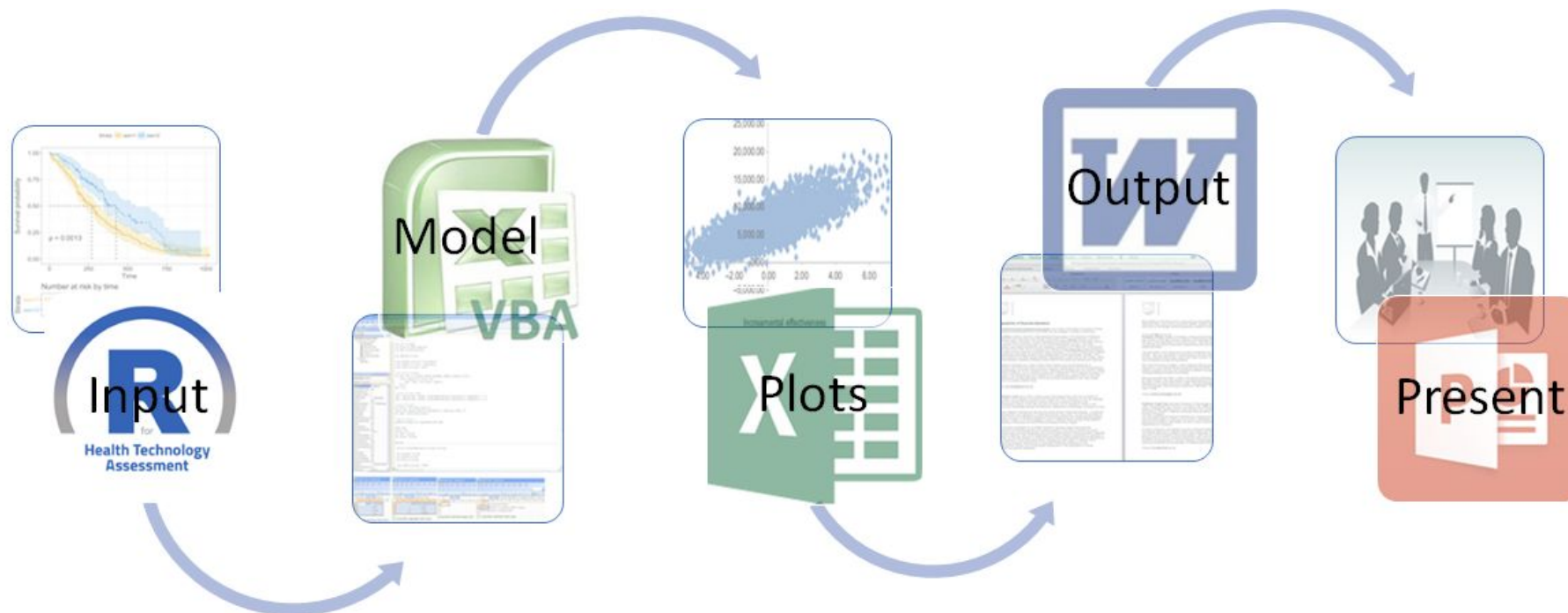


<https://github.com/dark-peak-analytics>

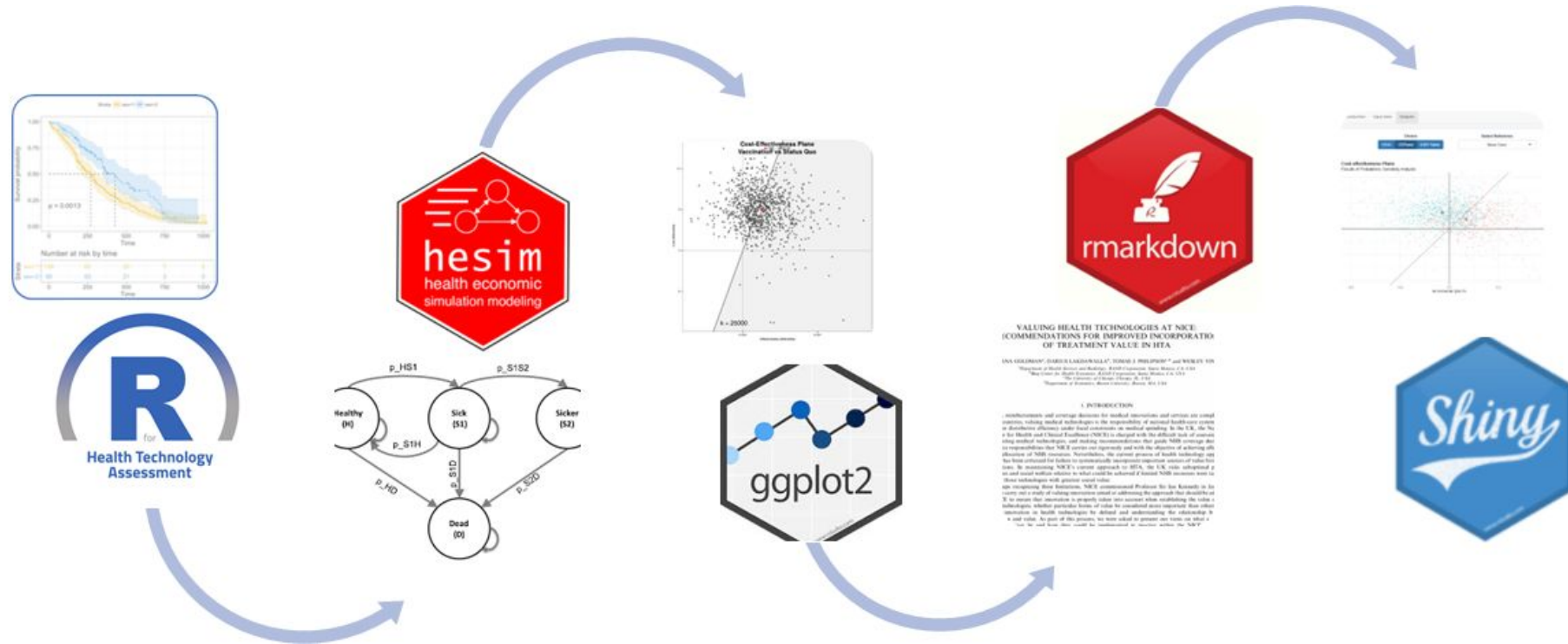


<https://www.linkedin.com/company/dark-peak-analytics>

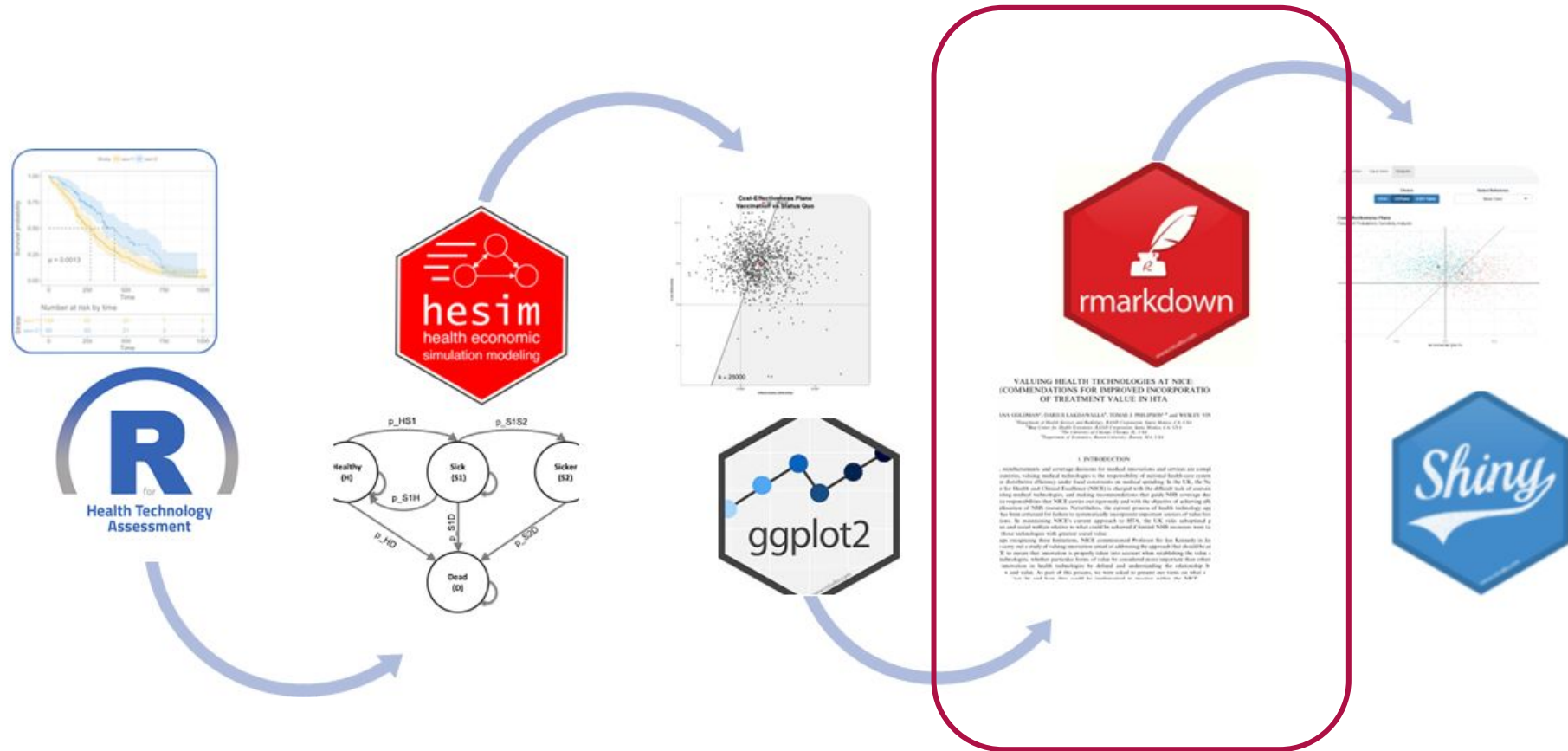
Current process



Future process



Future process



Timeline

Now on CRAN



2021

2022

2023

2024

2025



Making Health Economic Models Shiny: A tutorial

Smith & Schneider. Making health economic models Shiny: A tutorial. *Wellcome Open Res* 2020, **5**:69 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.15807.2>)

Living HTA: Automating Health Economic Evaluation with R

Smith, Schneider and Mohammed. Living HTA: Automating Health Economic Evaluation with R. *Wellcome Open Res* 2022, **7**:194 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.17933.2>)

R Packages for health economic evaluation: A tutorial

Smith RA, Mohammed W and Schneider PP. R Packages for health economic evaluation: A tutorial. 2023. (<https://wellcomeopenresearch.org/articles/8-419>)

assertHE: an R package to improve quality assurance of health economic models

Smith, Samyshkin, Mohammed et al. assertHE: an R package to improve quality assurance of health economic models. 2024. (<https://wellcomeopenresearch.org/articles/9-701>)

Automating Health Economic Evaluation with R (+genAI)

Smith, Lamrock, Dolin, Lewis, McQueen. R we almost there? Applying the advantages of modern software tools to the ICER Severe Asthma Model. In progress

Now a popular short course

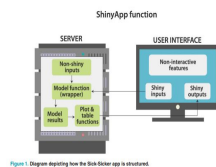
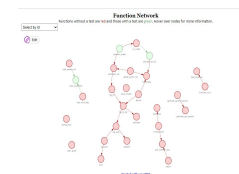
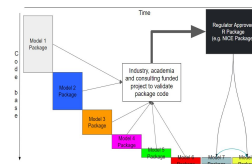
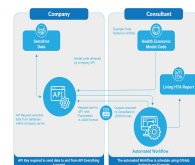


Figure 1. Diagram depicting how the ShinyApp app is structured.



Bibby
Open Source on GitHub

Case study: Joint Biosecurity Centre response to COVID-19



NHS
Test and Trace



Each day, huge quantities of data obtained by NHS T&T

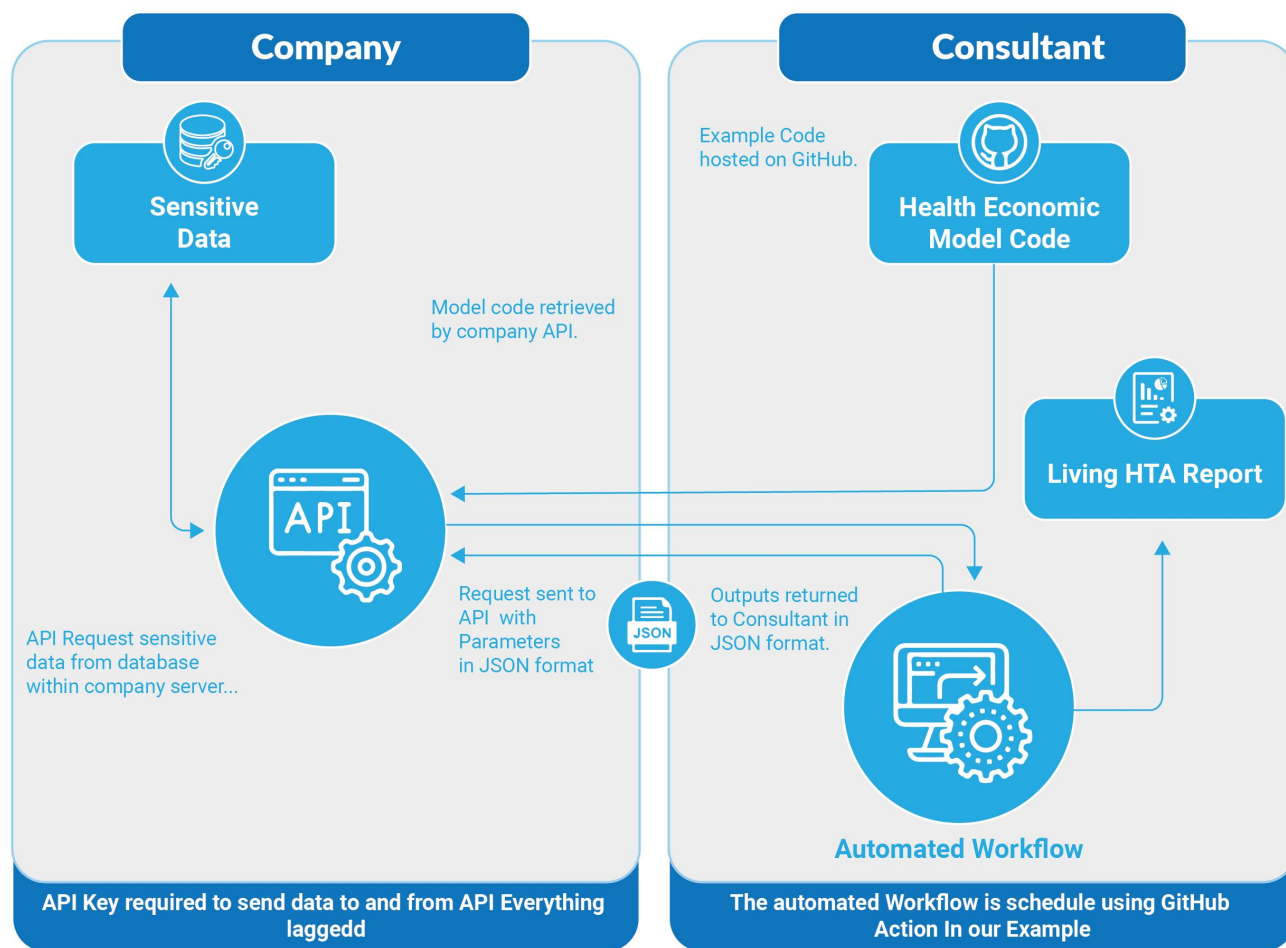
Clever people at JBC (later UKHSA) write code to visualise & describe epi situation

Slides generated, using progressively automated processes, checked, and provided to decision makers

Difficult decisions made

Disclaimer: This is a massively oversimplified and intentionally vague description of the process.

Making Health Economics ... hAP_pI



Aim

Create a system to automatically update models & modelling reports as new information emerges.

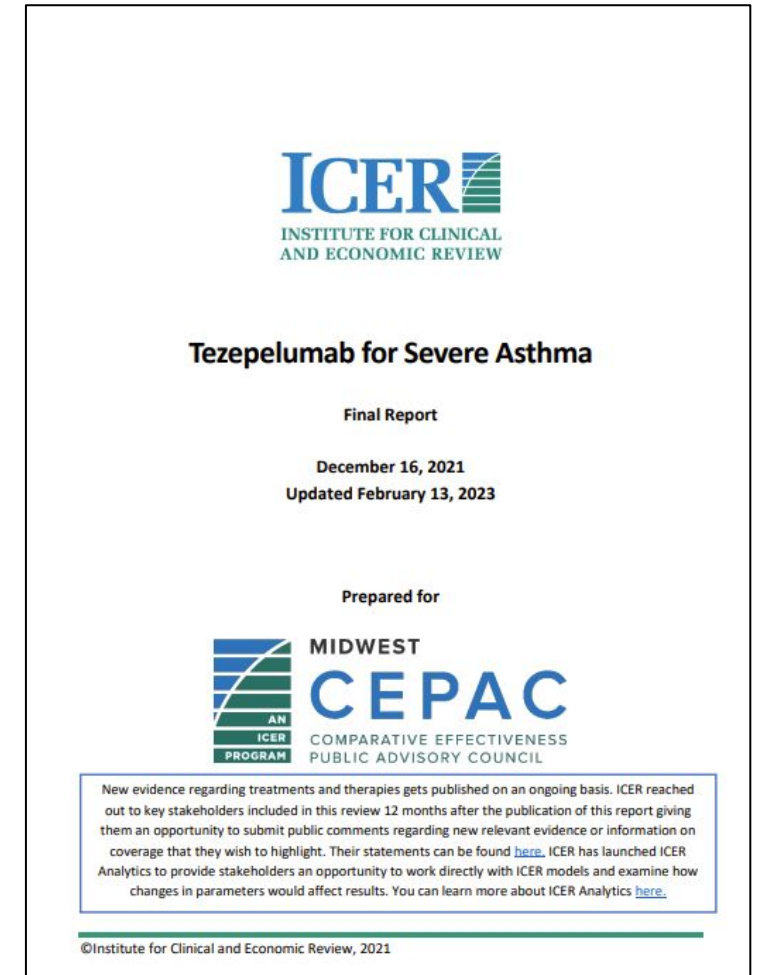
We want this system to:

- Allow users to change input values
 - Allow users to change **citations**
 - Re-run the model & get new results
 - Generate a modeling report in Word.
-
- ... integrate genAI to help us, particularly where:
 - the task is small & self contained.
 - we would just ask chatGPT anyway.



Case study

- ICER model for Severe Asthma originally published in 2021.
- Section 4 contains the Health Economic Model.
- Model developed in Excel & translated to R by Rob & Felicity with colleagues at the University of Colorado.
- Want to allow for automated updates to word format as per Smith, Schneider & Mohammed (2022).
- However, that paper was *waaaaayyyy* too advanced! This one will be simpler.



Exportable from
Endnote/Zotero



Data inputs

Health Economic
Model



R functions

Run
with R

Plots

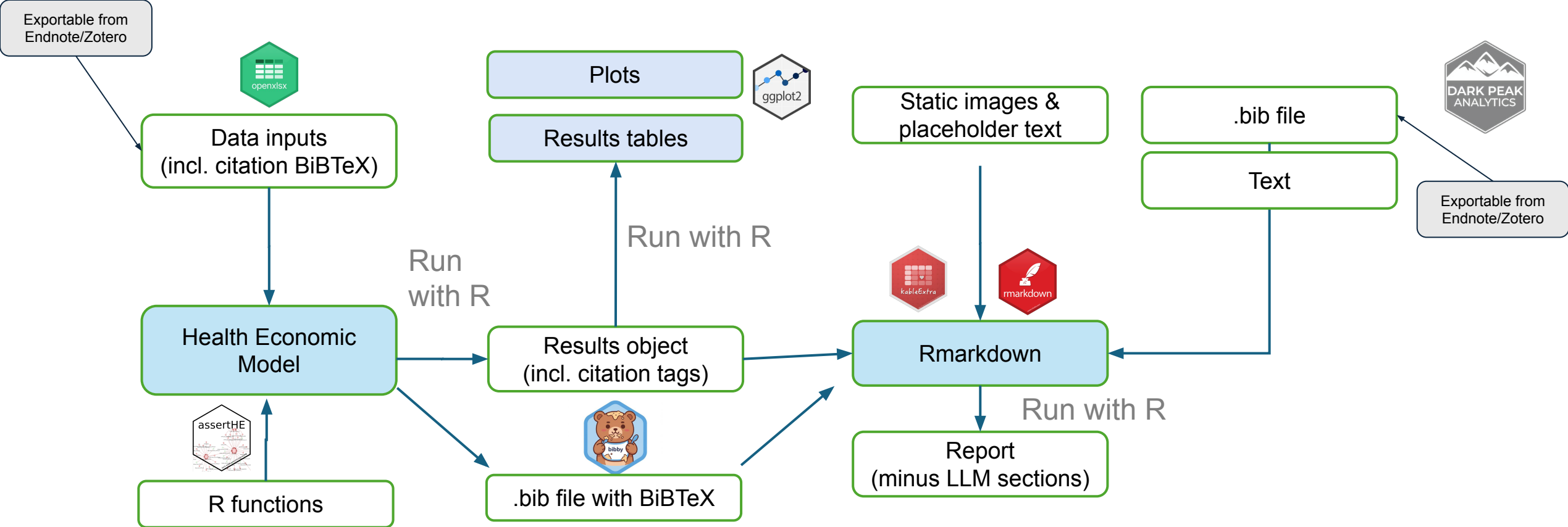


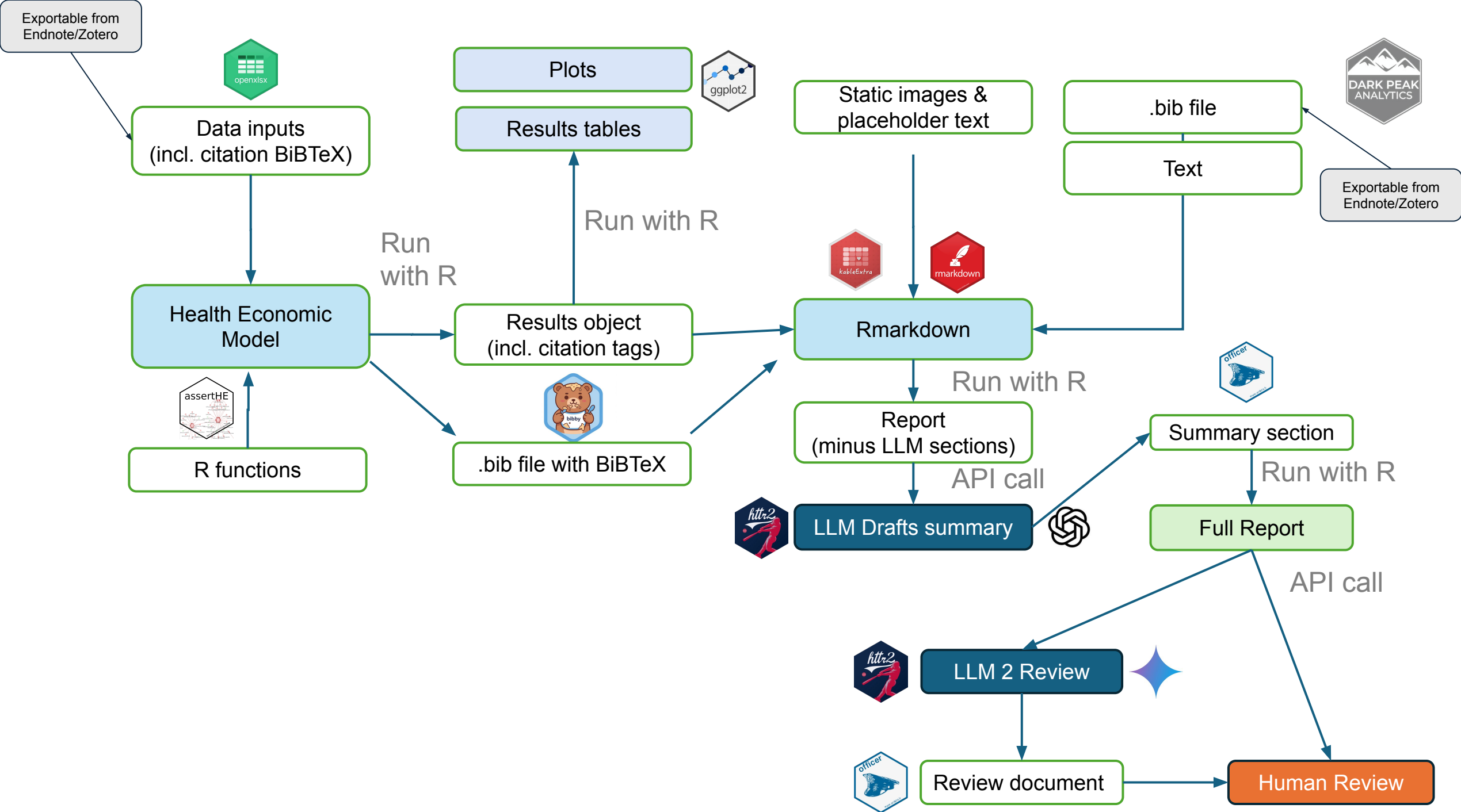
Results tables

Results object

Run with R







Demonstration

A screenshot of the RStudio IDE interface. The main editor window displays R code for clearing the environment and loading dependencies. The console at the bottom shows the R prompt and the current directory path. The file explorer on the right shows the project structure.

```
1 # Clear environment ----
2 rm(list = ls())
3
4 # Load dependencies ----
5 pkgs <- c(
6   "rmarkdown",
7   "assertthat",
8   "dplyr",
9   "assertHE",
10  "scales",
11  "knitr",
12  "kableExtra",
13  "flextable",
14  "bookdown",
15  "openxlsx",
16  "testthat",
17  "officer"
18 )
```

33:1 Data paths: Copilot: Completion response received. R Script

Console Terminal Background Jobs

R 4.4.0: ~/Projects/UoColorado/excel_to_r/icer-severe-asthma/

> |

Files Plots Packages Help Viewer Presentation

New Folder New Blank File Delete Rename More

Home > Projects > UoColorado > excel_to_r > icer-severe-asthma > report > outputs

Name	Size	Modified
..		



Demonstration

[illegible]



Demonstration

[illegible][illegible]

Demonstration

Table 2.3: Key Model Inputs 2

Parameter	Tezepelumab plus SoC	SoC Alone	Source
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations	0.361	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in Steroid Burst (without ED visit or hospitalization)	0.410	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in ED Visit (without hospitalization)	0.200	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in Hospitalization	0.200	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Non-Exacerbation Mean Health State Utility for Tezepelumab plus SoC vs SoC Alone (95% CI for tezepelumab mean difference vs. placebo)	0.790	0.75	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)

Table 3.1: Results table

Treatment	Cost	QALYs	LY	evLY
Tezepelumab and SOC	\$776,355	14.526	29.510	14.551
SoC Alone	\$491,215	13.061	28.916	13.061

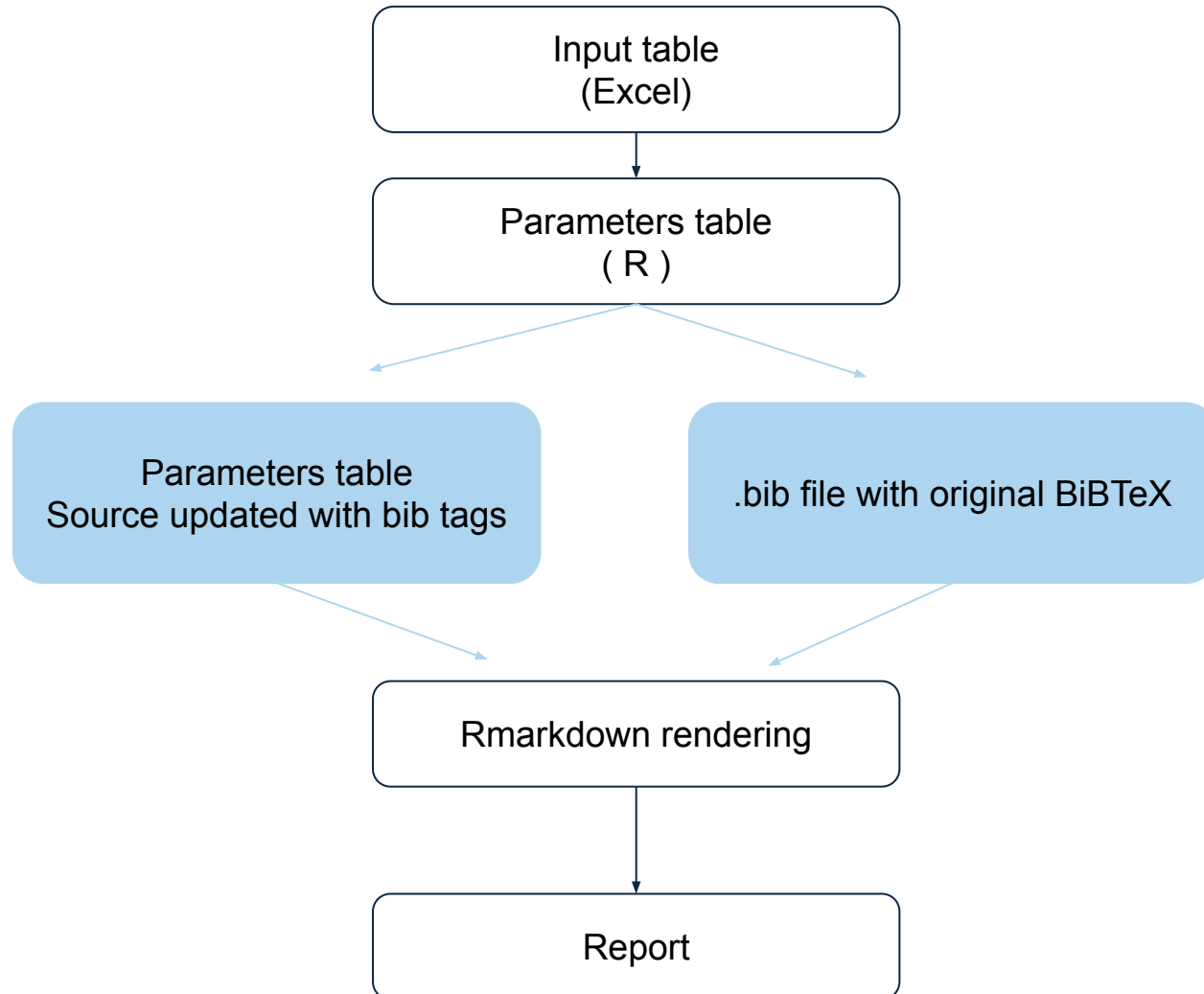
Table 2.3: Key Model Inputs 2

Parameter	Tezepelumab plus SoC	SoC Alone	Source
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations	0.600	Reference group	(Williams et al., 2023)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in Steroid Burst (without ED visit or hospitalization)	0.410	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in ED Visit (without hospitalization)	0.200	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
Tezepelumab Rate Ratio for Exacerbations Resulting in Hospitalization	0.200	Reference group	(Menzies-Gow et al., 2021)
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Table 3.1: Results table

Treatment	Cost	QALYs	LY	evLY
Tezepelumab and SOC	\$792,049	14.279	29.410	14.303
SoC Alone	\$491,215	13.061	28.916	13.061

Managing updates to inputs & citations



<https://github.com/dark-peak-analytics/bibby/>

Managing updates to inputs & citations

```
report_params$Source <- bibby::update_bib_file_from_vector(  
  v_bibtex_entries = report_params$Source,  
  path = "table_refs.bib",  
  output_type = "markdown_short"  
)
```

Source column to
update

bib file to update

format

Long: As **Williams et al. (2020)** argue, health policy should be evidence-based.

Short: Health policy should be evidence-based (**Williams et al., 2020**).



<https://github.com/dark-peak-analytics/bibby/>

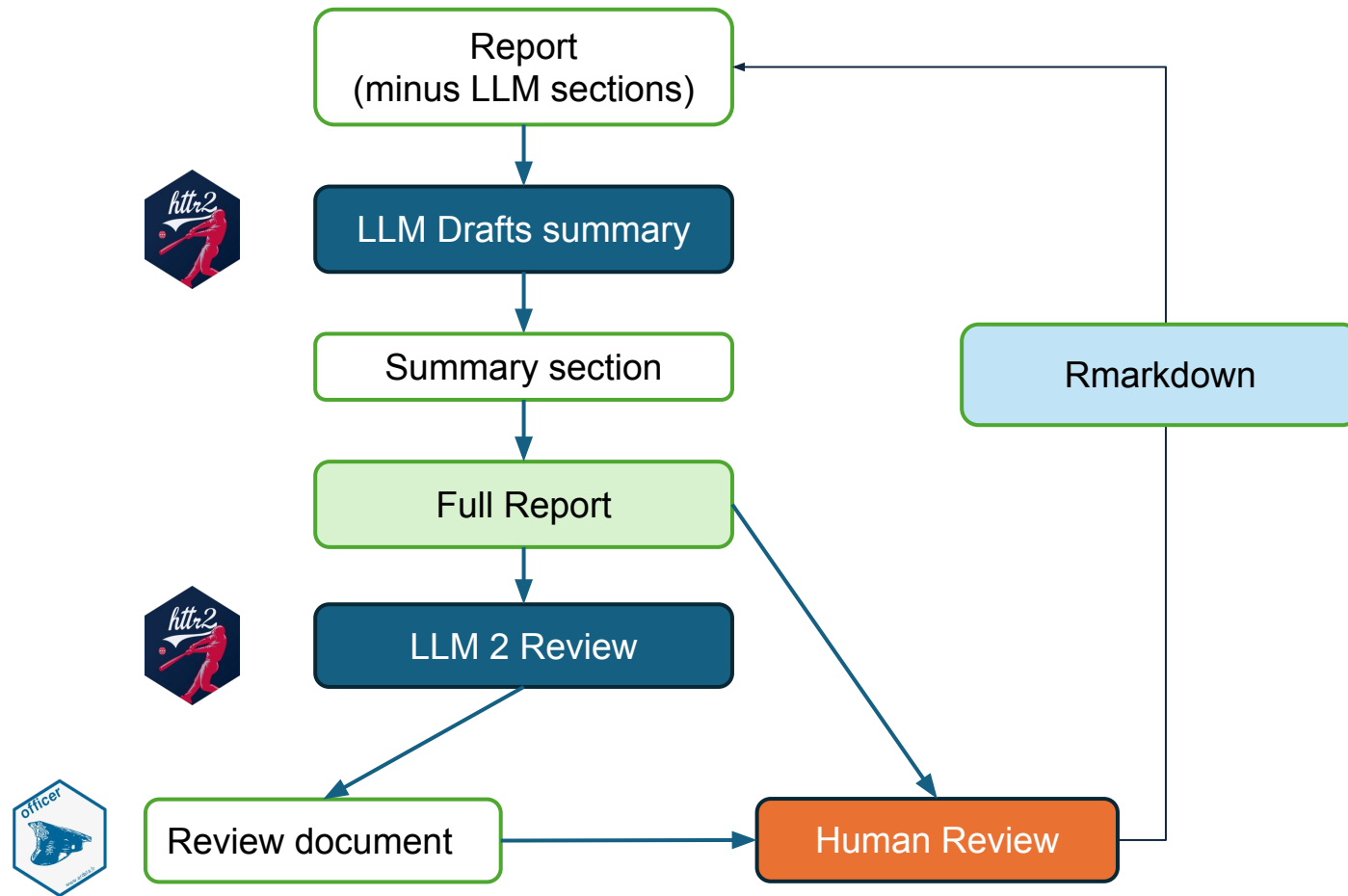
genAI role

- Minimal input – using the LLM via an API request with the httr2 package (Wickham, 2024)
- Small, self contained and quick to validate task - human review essential.
- The genAI output is used to generate a fully reproducible set of outputs – the code that is generated will give the same outputs every time.
- Further edits can be made in an independent process.



R/Python are the most logical languages for
a genAI tool to interact with a health
economic model – Excel is problematic

genAI role



R/Python are the most logical languages for a genAI tool to interact with a health economic model – Excel is problematic

genAI role

```
query_llm <- function(text,
                      base_url,
                      model,
                      prompt) {
  full_url <- paste0(base_url, model, ":generateContent")

  body <- jsonlite::toJSON(list(
    contents = list(
      list(
        parts = list(
          list(text = paste0(prompt, ":\n\n", text))
        )
      )
    ), auto_unbox = TRUE)

  response <- httr::POST(
    url = paste0(full_url, "?key=", Sys.getenv("GEMINI_API_KEY")),
    httr::content_type_json(),
    body = body
  )

  result <- httr::content(response, as = "text", encoding = "UTF-8")
  json <- jsonlite::fromJSON(result)
  return(json$candidates$content$parts[[1]]$text)
}
```



R/Python are the most logical languages for
a genAI tool to interact with a health
economic model – Excel is problematic

Challenges

Higher initial setup time compared to building a single model; efficiency gains typically emerge after ~3–5 value edits or adaptations.

Requires a diverse skillset, including R, R Markdown/Markdown, API calls, prompt engineering, health economic evaluation, BiBTeX referencing, and Excel.

Risk of inconsistency: some changes must be made in multiple locations, increasing the chance of error if not carefully managed.

Potential downsides for team development, including over-reliance on automation and reduced contextual understanding—especially concerning for training junior staff.

Opportunities

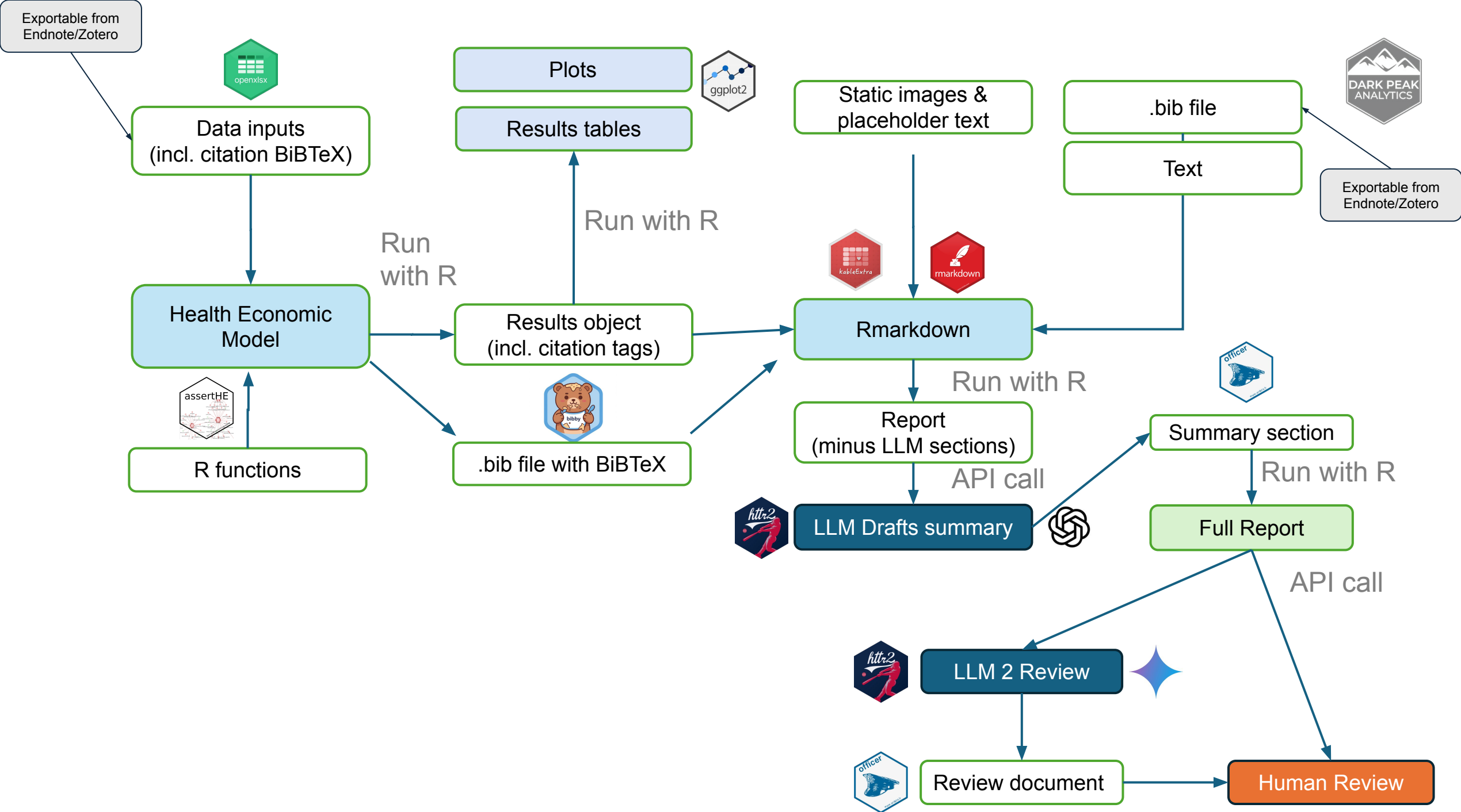
Developing a user interface enables non-programmers to contribute meaningfully to the modelling process.

High value in complex or dynamic contexts, such as models covering multiple countries (3+) or those requiring regular data updates (e.g. early models or living HTAs).

Script-based models align well with LLM capabilities, making them easier to review, validate, and incrementally improve.

LLMs can reduce manual effort, taking on minor edits and supporting model validation, freeing up human time from repetitive tasks like copy-pasting.

Extra Slides



The inputs

- Inputs provided in Excel with named ranges & read into a list object in R using openxlsx (Schauberger & Walker, 2023).
- Inputs include:
 - Parameter names
 - Parameter values
 - Parameter strings (for use in text)
 - Parameter citations (in BiBTeX format)
- Decision to use named ranges not obvious but preferred by clients.



Excel inputs sheet



The health economic model

- ICER Severe Asthma Model, translated from Excel -> R.
- Model run on input object & results object generated.
- The model is a Markov model with 4 states: mild, ..., dead.
- It runs 1000 PSA iterations in x seconds.
- It is documented in Roxygen & has unit tests for each function as described in Smith, Mohammed & Schneider (2023).

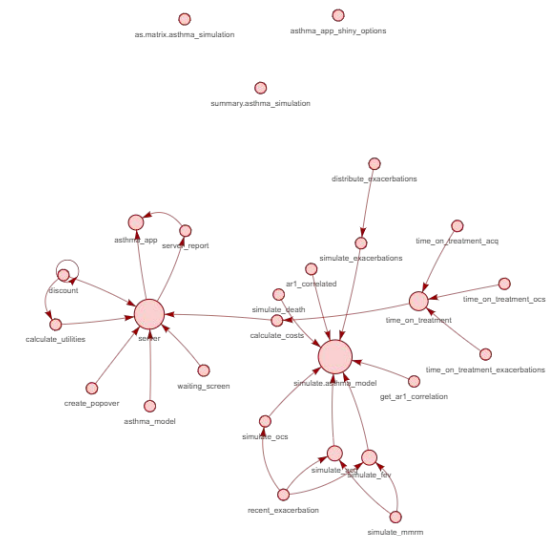


Image showing model structure

The report

- R-markdown report (yes we are aware of Quarto!)
- Tables & plots pulled in from R model outputs
- Text input from multiple files (e.g. introduction.txt), allowing non-technical users to provide their own introduction sections.
- Version controlled on GitHub to allow to link to model used.
- References handled in two .bib files. One provided for references in context text, one autogenerated by R.

Image showing citations process