

Starting or Strengthening a Drug Bulletin - A Practical Manual

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Using medicines rationally requires that impartial, up to date unbiased information is available to prescribers' and healthcare professionals. An effective approach is local production of a drug bulletin. The bulletin can ensure the availability of information tailored to local requirements. The International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB) is a worldwide network of bulletins on drugs and therapeutics, which are independent of the pharmaceutical industry. ISDB was started to ensure closer cooperation between drug bulletins in different countries and regions.

Producing a drug bulletin in a resource-limited set up in a developing country is a challenging task. This manual provides an opportunity for people involved in drug bulletins to share their experience and expertise. The manual starts with a chapter on the 'Rational use of medicines'. The role of drug bulletins in providing information for rational drug use is stressed. The history of drug bulletins is well covered. Chapter 4 deals with defining aims, target and type of bulletin.

The fifth chapter is vital and involves planning resources. The text boxes highlight important points or describe the experiences of different drug bulletins from various countries. Cost-saving strategies and the key messages will be especially interesting for the readers.

The editorial process of a drug bulletin has been described in detail. The process of reviewing a new drug to decide whether it represents a significant therapeutic

advance or is just a 'me too' drug has been well covered. The practical issues of design and production and dissemination of the bulletin is sometimes very difficult to handle. The manual provides guidelines, which may be helpful.

Organizational and legal framework issues become more vital as a bulletin grows. Auditing a bulletin's usefulness and obtaining feedback from the readers has been well described. The practical example of an assessment survey will be useful in planning future surveys. Partnership and collaboration between bulletins has been discussed in detail. The appendix deals with electronic sources of information, which will be very useful to the readers. The manual ends with a feedback and evaluation form. The manual can be downloaded from the ISDB website (<http://www.isdbweb.org>). The manual states that the full text with relevant articles is available on the web at <http://mednet2.who.int/DrugBulletinProject/>. However, the particular website is not yet functional.

The manual will be of interest to all those already running a drug bulletin or interested in starting a new one.

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