

Recent Publications

Nordic statistics on medicines: 1993–1995

National consumption statistics have been published for the Nordic countries by the Nordic Council on Medicines (NLN) covering Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Their purpose is to make data on drug consumption more generally available. The new publication provides comparative data between countries, and illustrates trends in drug consumption with emphasis on national differences. In order to give a perspective to the data, the statistics are compared to those of Australia, Estonia and Spain.

NLN Publication No. 43. Nordiska Läkemedelsnämnden, Nordic Council on Medicines, Uppsala, Sweden. ISBN 91-86432-42-7

Pharmacological action and therapeutic use of drugs – list of terms

Since 1989, members of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on the International Pharmacopoeia and Pharmaceutical Preparations designated to deal with the selection of INNs have recognized that the terms describing the pharmacological action and therapeutic use of pharmaceuticals were in need of harmonization.

A review of the situation has indicated that the lack of a unique, generally accepted reference list can lead to use of various terminologies originating from different sources of information. This diversity is reflected in inconsistencies in numerous documents and information material issued such as drug monitoring reports and newsletters, and many other documents and publications related to pharmaceuticals.

A standard list of terms was therefore drawn up after a comparison had been made of terminologies used around the world. Despite the diversity of the references, it soon became evident that the vast majority of terms could be traced back to a dozen or so internationally recognized reference sources. It furthermore became apparent that nuances in meaning were usually attached to the terms used by individuals so that while concepts were largely comparable, the specific terms were no longer synonymous. As a consequence, a cumulative list of terms with an accompanying grouping by concept was felt necessary. In each conceptual group, a candidate preferred term has been selected.

The current list therefore features preferred terms, printed in bold, arranged in alphabetical order in English, French and Spanish. The corresponding equivalents are listed and any synonyms — as they appear in the literature — are set out below. Simple rules were followed to ensure maximum consistency in the selection of preferred terms. To be concise, single-word terms were chosen whenever possible. For example, the action exerted on various receptors is described as “agonist” or “antagonist”. “Inhibitor” is used to describe the action on enzymes, and “hormone inhibitor” and “enzyme inhibitor” refer to general action. Specific hormone or enzyme names should be used to describe the corresponding action. Finally, the systemic impact of a given drug is implied by its specific therapeutic use. Additional qualifications in the form of adjectives may be added, as necessary, for further accuracy.

Pharmacological action and therapeutic use of drugs — list of terms, (WHO/PHARM/97.594) can be obtained free of charge in English, French and Spanish from the Programme on International Nonproprietary Names, Division of Drug Management & Policies, WHO, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

Please note that henceforth lists of recommended International Nonproprietary Names (INNs) will appear twice yearly, in alternance with the proposed INNs. An added feature of the lists will be the inclusion of graphic formulae.



**WHO Programme on International Nonproprietary
Names (INN) for Pharmaceutical Substances
Division of Drug Management & Policies
World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland
e mail: koppkubels@who.ch
Fax: +41 22 791 0746
Telephone: +41 22 7913636**