

Recent Publications and Documents

Guidelines for HIV and infant feeding

It is now recognized that if an HIV-infected mother breastfeeds, there is an additional risk that her infant will be infected. In many countries, personnel dealing with health, nutrition and welfare are beginning to face a demand for information, advice and support from anxious mothers and families. Besides being of intense personal concern, the issue of HIV transmission through breastfeeding is also of public health importance — especially in countries where both fertility rates and HIV-infection of pregnant women are high. AIDS has already doubled the mortality of children under 5 years of age in some areas. Although only a small proportion of this increase is the result of breastfeeding, there is a pressing need for countries to develop and implement sound public health policies on HIV and infant feeding.

The guidelines cover policy issues and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of HIV and infant feeding strategies, and include a list of useful resources and reference materials. They also summarize knowledge of HIV transmission through breastmilk

HIV and Infant Feeding: Guidelines for Decision-Makers. UNICEF/UNAIDS/WHO. Document WHO/FRH/NUT/CHD/98.1. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. e mail: publications@who.ch

Symptom relief in terminal illness

This guide explains the management of secondary symptoms commonly seen in patients suffering from cancer, AIDS, and other terminal diseases. Practical advice is offered on how to evaluate patients and find ways to improve their comfort and quality of life, and emphasis is placed on the need for individual treatment plans.

Each symptom is covered according to a common approach which outlines possible causes, describes the steps to follow and explains how to select and implement the best treatment option. For drug therapies, information includes recommended drugs, doses, and modes of administration, to-

gether with advice dealing with side-effects and other problems that may arise.

The book complements information contained in the WHO guide, *Cancer Pain Relief: with a Guide to Opioid Availability, 2nd ed.* Pain management is therefore not covered in this publication.

Symptom Relief in Terminal Illness. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. ISBN 92 4 154507 0. Price: Sw.fr. 25 (Sw.fr 17.50 in developing countries). e mail: publications@who.ch

Guidance modules on antiretroviral treatments

Tremendous optimism has been generated by the recent development of new antiretrovirals, particularly the triple combination therapies, which promise a longer and better life for people living with HIV/AIDS. In response to requests for information on these treatments and for policy and technical guidance for health professionals and governments, nine guidance modules have been published by WHO in collaboration with UNAIDS. The modules cover the following topics:

1. Introduction to antiretroviral treatments.
2. Introducing antiretroviral treatments into national health systems: economic considerations.
3. ARV treatments: planning and integration into health services.
4. Safe and effective use of antiretrovirals.
5. Laboratory requirements for the safe and effective use of antiretrovirals.
6. The use of antiretroviral drugs to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV.
7. Treatments following exposure to HIV.
8. Antiretrovirals: regulation, distribution and control.
9. Ethical and societal issues relating to antiretroviral treatments.

UNAIDS and WHO are committed to increasing access to new technologies which have been shown to be effective in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS, and to improving the length and quality of life of all those in need. However, enthusiasm for the possibilities of triple therapy is tempered by several concerns. These involve the long-term benefit and safety of use and accessibility and compliance with these expensive and complicated treatments. Furthermore, sophisticated laboratory and clinical services with qualified care providers are necessary for these therapies and follow-up.

Meanwhile, UNAIDS and WHO will continue to assess progress, and guidance provided in the modules will be regularly updated.

Guidance modules on antiretroviral treatments. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. WHO/ASD/98.1. e-mail: publications@who.ch

Re-evaluating the safety profile of marketed drugs

Addressed primarily to regulatory authorities and drug manufacturers, this publication responds to the absence of any harmonized, systematic procedures for assessing newly detected hazards, balancing risks against benefits, and defining the results in terms of action.

A group of 24 representatives of government regulatory authorities and industry offer detailed advice on concepts and procedures for determining the magnitude of the safety problem and deciding on appropriate action. This may involve a routine change in product information or immediate withdrawal of the drug from the market.

The publication promotes a public health approach to encourage consistent practices when a major safety problem is identified. Examples are used to illustrate responses when evaluating benefit through scoring the seriousness of different adverse reactions. The model standard reporting form presented in the publication plays a central role in the recommended procedures. It concludes with a

series of in-depth case histories for seven drugs and a model for the quantification of risks. This is accompanied by a detailed example of how the model works in practice.

Benefit-risk balance for marketed drugs: evaluating safety signals. CIOMS. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. ISBN 92 9036 068 2. Price: Sw.fr. 15 (Sw.fr 10.50 in developing countries). e-mail: publications@who.ch

Interventions to improve antimalarial use

A Task Force on Improved Use of Antimalarials was set up in 1993 by the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases to identify and test ways to rationalize and improve the home treatment of malaria using existing oral antimalarials. Research interventions were implemented in six South-East Asian countries which had the highest rates of antimalarial multidrug resistance in the world. Treatment regimens included a 5-day combination of artesunate + mefloquine and a 7-day course of quinine + tetracycline. The Task Force provided a forum for identifying problem areas and testing the effect of small but potentially important changes in the delivery of drugs in the private sector.

Several approaches were tested in Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. These included subsidies for certain drug combinations, improved packaging of doses, health education interventions, use of a pharmacological marker to measure compliance, and assessment of drug quality. The results are described in a supplement of the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. User-friendly packaging of drugs, which included simple and clear patient information, produced the best results.

Interventions to improve antimalarial use. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 76 (Suppl. 1), 1998. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. ISBN 92 4 068751 3. Price: Sw.fr. 20.- (Sw.fr. 14.- in developing countries). e-mail: publications@who.ch