

Recent Publications and Documents

The New Emergency Health Kit 98

The provision of health care is difficult and demanding in the aftermath of large scale emergencies and disasters. In collaboration with a large number of international agencies, WHO has developed the emergency health kit which is available from a number of major pharmaceutical suppliers. The present publication explains how to use the standardized packages of essential drugs, supplies and equipment which make up the kit.

The emergency health kit is designed to expedite the provision of supplies, in particular by emergency relief agencies. A complete kit contains two separate sets of drugs and supplies: the main set is intended for use by health workers located in remote areas or operating under isolated conditions, and the supplementary kit contains drugs, renewable supplies and equipment needed by doctors working in first level health facilities.

The concept of an emergency health kit has been developed over years of study and field testing. Information has been drawn from epidemiological data, population profiles and specific disease patterns following emergencies. A description of the contents of the health kit, treatment guidelines and checklists for suppliers and prescribers are also included as part of the publication. Useful annexes have been integrated into the book including the *Model Guideline for the International Provision of Controlled Medicines for Emergency Medical Care*, and *Guidelines for Drug Donations*.

The New Emergency Health Kit 98. WHO/DAP/98.10. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: publications@who.ch. Price Sw.Fr. 8.-

Tuberculosis and air travel

In recent years, the potential for transmission of tuberculosis infection during air travel has been investigated. Although the risk of transmission has been documented, it seems to be relatively low. Nonetheless, within the next decade, it is expected that more than two billion passengers per year will

travel by scheduled air traffic. Because airlines, passengers, physicians and health authorities need to know the risk of tuberculosis transmission and how to take proper measures, WHO has issued guidelines endorsed by the Aerospace Medical Association and the Airline Medical Directors Association.

The guidelines were produced in collaboration with international health experts, civil aviation authorities and airline company representatives. The guidelines give recommendations for collaboration between physicians, health authorities and airline companies. Advice is given on prevention and management of infectious passengers, contact tracing, conducting investigations, reducing the risk of exposure, and improving air quality and ventilation.

Tuberculosis and Air Travel: Guidelines for Prevention and Control. WHO/TB/98.258. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: publications@who.ch

Effects of antimicrobials used in food-producing animals

The US Food and Drug Administration has recently issued *A Proposed Framework for Evaluating and Assuring the Human Safety of the Microbial Effects of Antimicrobial New Animal Drugs Intended for Use in Food-Producing Animals*. This is the second step in the Agency's efforts to develop policies to deal with the problem of antimicrobial resistance. The FDA is particularly concerned that significant human antimicrobial therapies are not lost as a result of the overuse of antimicrobials in food-producing animals.

As a first step, the Agency has produced the draft guidance document *Evaluation of the Human Health Impact of the Microbial Effects of Antimicrobial New Animal Drugs Intended for Use in Food-Producing Animals*. This document has set out two criteria for evaluation of (i) the quantity of antimicrobial drug resistant enteric bacteria formed in the animal's intestinal tract following exposure to the

antimicrobial; and (ii) any changes in the number of enteric bacteria in the animal's intestinal tract that cause human illness (pathogenic load). Its aim is also to address the risk of increased human infections as a result of disturbance of the normal intestinal microbial ecosystem causing an increase in pathogens in the animal.

A Proposed Framework for Evaluating and Assuring the Human Safety of the Microbial Effects of Antimicrobial New Animal Drugs Intended for Use in Food-Producing Animals. Available from the Food and Drug Administration. <http://www.fda.gov/cvm/fda/infores/vmac/ANTIM18.htm>

Quality control methods for medicinal plant materials

Because of their increasing use worldwide, more and more attention is being paid to the quality of plant materials used in over-the-counter preparations, home remedies or as raw materials for pharmaceutical preparations.

This book has been prepared in response to the need for international harmonization in quality control testing of medicinal plant materials. It contains descriptions of recommended test methods for identity, purity and content, together with a detailed list of the reagents and solutions necessary to carry these out. The purpose of the tests is twofold, to fulfil the needs of quality control laboratories and to provide a basis for the development of national standards.

The book will be useful for national drug regulatory authorities, the pharmaceutical industry and pharmacists working with medicinal plant materials.

Quality control methods for medicinal plant materials. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: publications@who.ch. Price Sw.Fr. 35.- (Price in developing countries: Sw.Fr. 24.50).

Basic tests for drugs

Basic tests represent one of the many elements of quality assurance for pharmaceutical products. The

basic test series has been developed by WHO to provide a simple method to confirm the identity of a substance or indicate whether gross degradation has occurred. The tests described in the latest manual, *Basic Tests for Drugs: Pharmaceutical Substances, Medicinal Plant Materials and Dosage Forms*, are meant to complement the previously published *Basic Tests for Pharmaceutical Substances* and *Basic Tests for Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms*.

The book describes test procedures for 23 pharmaceutical substances and 58 pharmaceutical dosage forms, including basic tests for confirming the identity of 4 commonly used medicinal plant materials. A description of other tests is made, including thin-layer chromatography and volumetric or spectrophotometric analysis which can be useful in screening. The book concludes with a cumulative index of test procedures contained in this and the previous two related publications.

Basic Tests for Drugs: Pharmaceutical Substances, Medicinal Plant Materials and Dosage Forms. Available from: World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: publications@who.ch. Price Sw.Fr. 26.- (Price in developing countries: Sw.Fr. 18.20).

Information data base for dietary supplements

Currently, the term dietary supplement is used for a wide array of products available in health food stores, pharmacies or by mail order which contain vitamins, minerals, nutrients and herbals as well as ingredients and extracts of animal and plant origin. Given the growing problems surrounding the terminology used to describe the ingredients of dietary supplements, the National Institutes of Health has launched a database for access via the internet to provide scientific information on supplements. The site will assist health experts and the public to determine the status of substances with reference to published scientific literature and will provide definitions on what a dietary supplement is considered to be.

National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements. Available on: <http://odp.od.nih.gov/ods>