



Book review: Responsible use of medicines – A layman's handbook

Dear Editor,

Responsible self-medication has been recommended by various organizations including the World Health Organization as a means to reduce the cost of medicine therapy and improve effectiveness. Modern humans consume medicine regularly for a variety of conditions including both acute and chronic diseases. The medicines could either be prescribed by a healthcare practitioner or purchased from a pharmacy or other outlets without a prescription. Recently, the Indian Pharmaceutical Association and the Pharmacy Council of India have published a book dealing with the responsible use of medicines. The well-produced book is divided into 21 chapters.

The first chapter provides basic information about medicines. The various steps involved in developing a medicine are outlined. The various systems of medicine practiced in India are the focus of the second chapter. The legal language used in this chapter for citing various laws dealing with food supplements may be difficult for a general reader to understand. The diagrammatic explanation of drug labels in chapter 3 will be very useful. Patient package inserts should be promoted, and pharmacies should create ancillary labels for dispensed medicine and have trained pharmacy staff available to counsel patients. A major problem in India could be that medicines from complementary systems of medicine are freely available without a prescription and could cause adverse reactions and other problems in patients. The diagrams in this book are well designed and informative. The language in some places, however, tends toward the technical and may be difficult for laypersons.

The chapter about the pharmacist provides valuable information about this often misunderstood health professional. The chapter providing advice regarding issues to be considered while purchasing medicines will be very useful. A problem with accessing information is that the book does not mention the chapter number and title at the top/bottom of the page. The book also does not have an index. The boxes and tables provide simple,

high-quality information. Chapter 8 provides useful tips for storing medicines. The chapters on self-medication and understanding your medicines are well written. The compliance aids mentioned in chapter 12 will be advantageous to patients. Being associated with pharmacovigilance programs, we found the chapter on adverse effects of medicines to be of special interest. The section on whether to take a medicine with food or before food provides very useful information. The chapter on drug advertisements could have been in greater detail as misleading, and substandard advertisements are common in developing nations.

The advice regarding the use of specific medicines in children will be useful to parents. The chapters on medicine use in the elderly and during pregnancy and lactation are well written. The chapter on dosage forms could have used better and more explanatory diagrams and pictures in certain places but provides valuable information which is not usually available to the public. The step-by-step directions on using various dosage forms are simple and easy to understand. The book ends with a list of some useful healthcare websites for accessing more information. A brief one or two sentence description of each of these sites would have been useful.

This book is freely available online and will be useful to the public in India and other developing countries to use medicines responsibly. The book will also be of interest to community pharmacists in developing countries. This is a good initiative from the organizations and authors, which requires appreciation and credit.

About the book: 'Responsible use of medicines: A layman's handbook' is published by the Indian Pharmaceutical Association, Pharmacy Council of India. The book is freely available at http://www.ipapharma.org/html/npw2014/Responsible%20Use%20of%20Medicines%20Handbook_IPA.pdf

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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