

- Tall man letters are 'uppercase letters that are used within a drug name to highlight its primary dissimilarities with look-alike drug names', for example AZopt and ATROpt. Several studies have shown that using tall man lettering can make similar drug names easier to distinguish, and that fewer selection errors are made when tall man letters are used.<sup>1</sup>
- Bar coding of all medications. Pharmaceutical Defence Limited recommends the use of scanners in the dispensing process and it is either compulsory in Pharmacy Acts (in Victoria) or included in Regulations. The use of a computer to scan the medication bar code after selection to confirm that the product selected is what was intended, before completing the process and providing medication to patients, can significantly reduce the risk of drug selection errors.<sup>2</sup>
- Over-labelling of a manufacturer's label can be addressed by attaching the label so that it is only attached to a small area and 'flagged' or doubled over so that the dispenser and patient can still see the product's name.
- The role of the patient or carer as a 'defence' is critical and patients should be encouraged to ask and check whenever something is presented that does not look, sound or appear familiar.<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. Use of tall man letters is gaining wide acceptance. Institute for Safe Medication Practices. 2008 July 31. [www.ismp.org/Newsletters/acutecare/articles/20080731.asp](http://www.ismp.org/Newsletters/acutecare/articles/20080731.asp) [cited 2009 Sep 4]
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3. 10 tips for safer health care: what everyone needs to know. Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care. 2003. [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/BE79FB82644728ABCA2571C0000330FB/\\$File/10tipsclnbox.pdf](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/BE79FB82644728ABCA2571C0000330FB/$File/10tipsclnbox.pdf) [cited 2009 Sep 4]

## Book review

**Therapeutic Guidelines: Dermatology. Version 3.** Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Limited; 2009. 335 pages. Price \$39, students \$30, plus postage. Also available in electronic formats as eTG complete.

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The third edition of Therapeutic Guidelines: Dermatology provides a valuable resource for general practitioners, general practice registrars and other doctors-in-training. The book is well organised into disease categories covered in succinct chapters, facilitating its use as a quick reference guide for busy medical professionals.

The chapter on 'getting to know your drugs' is a concise summary of the numerous available prescribed and over-the-counter medicines used in current practice. Helpfully, it outlines the most suitable therapeutic preparation to use (for instance ointments, gels, lotions) for a particular skin disease.

The skin disorders commonly encountered in practice by the target medical audience are covered in thorough detail. The

chapters on acne, psoriasis, dermatitis, hair disorders and nail disorders comprise stepwise treatment plans based on best practice guidelines that are easy to follow, while also providing an appropriate refresher summary on pathogenesis and classification. In keeping with the times, a chapter is dedicated to the ever evolving discipline of cosmetic dermatology, delivering relevant insights into the therapeutic options available in this field.

A limitation of the book is the absence of visual images. Dermatology is to a considerable extent a visual science and accordingly, the inclusion of a set of images to illustrate a number of the conditions would have been useful. Although the guidelines do not seek to fill the role of a dermatological atlas, visual aide memoires for less commonly encountered, unusual or frequently misdiagnosed disorders would have been a beneficial addition. The chapter on dermatological emergencies, blistering disorders and connective tissue disorders in particular, could have benefited from such a visual approach.

Overall, the book is a worthy addition to the therapeutic guidelines library. It is sufficiently detailed and offers a methodical approach for the management of dermatological disorders. I would recommend it as a valuable resource to the readers of *Australian Prescriber*.