

consequences including breakdown of social order. Selective antiviral prophylaxis then becomes a very important public health measure. To quote the World Health Organization influenza pandemic preparedness plan¹ 'it would be appropriate... to maintain a supply [of anti-influenza drugs] adequate for critical needs which might arise, such as protection of health care staff and laboratory workers'.

Peter Lake

Senior Medical Officer

Port Adelaide Community Health Service

Port Adelaide, SA

REFERENCE

1. World Health Organization. Influenza pandemic preparedness plan: the role of WHO and guidelines for national and regional planning. Annex E. Geneva: WHO; 1999 Apr. <http://www.who.int/emc-documents/influenza/docs/index.htm>

Drug promotion

Editor, – Dr Herxheimer rightly said in his editorial 'The importance of independent drug bulletins' (Aust Prescr 2002;25:3-4) that some over-enthusiastic colleagues talk about their preferred treatment. This is done not out of enthusiasm or devotion, but because of inducements offered by drug companies. There is now an unhealthy practice of drug companies hiring specialists to speak about their new products to select groups of medical practitioners especially invited to hill stations or costly hotels. How do medical associations and medical councils allow such a partisan practice by their members?

Wishvas Rane

Pune

India

CD review

Electronic Therapeutic Guidelines: complete (eTG complete). January 2002. Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Limited.

Price: \$220 subscription per year includes 3–4 updates. (Subsequent years approx. half any advertised initial subscription)*

John Fraser, Associate Professor and Director, New England Area Rural Training Unit, Tamworth, NSW

'eTG complete' is an interactive CD-ROM allowing easy access and searching of peer-reviewed Australian clinical guidelines produced by Therapeutic Guidelines Limited. Topics include analgesia, antibiotics, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrinology, neurology, gastroenterology, dermatology, palliative care, psychotropics and drug prescribing in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

I have regularly subscribed to the paper-based versions of these guidelines for the last 10 years. They are an invaluable resource as an aid to clinical practice particularly in rural areas where access to specialist advice may be limited and some medical conditions are encountered infrequently. I now recommend these texts to my general practice registrars preparing for their examinations as a useful means of updating and revision. All versions are endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and other relevant discipline-specific specialist organisations and colleges. New versions are peer-reviewed, evidence-based and referenced.

Converting from a paper-based reference system to the electronic version, I found the software installed easily without difficulties. The software allows on-screen access to the familiar paper-based versions of guidelines. I found the pregnancy and

breastfeeding guidelines to be a very useful addition allowing drugs to be searched alphabetically. The capacity to cross-reference and search topics which are discussed in more than one guideline is one of the main advantages of combining the guidelines into one electronic version.

A list of topics containing the search word are listed after each search. Alternatively, you can scroll down an index of topics. Consideration of bolding the main listing of the topic would be useful as some searches I conducted listed over 20 topics containing the word of interest. This would detract from its utility in checking details, when I am consulting, if I needed to scroll through multiple screens.

On average, 2–3 new editions of guidelines are developed each year. The subscription price of the CD compares with the paper version as it includes several updates to accommodate these new versions. After the first year, the price will be around \$110 per year which equates with buying three new guidelines. My present versions of the guidelines include my own personal list of notes, writings and exceptions to 'rules' I have encountered in implementing them in practice. The CD-ROM version does not offer scope for you to add this same information. Consideration of a personal notes file on the C: drive linked to the CD-ROM may be considered to get around this problem. The 'eTG complete' is a useful addition to general practice, improving access to up-to-date peer-reviewed information in primary care.

Minimum system requirements

CD-ROM drive and mouse

32 MB of RAM, 60 MB free HDD space

Windows 95/98me/2000/XP: Pentium processor

Macintosh: Power Macintosh 7100/80 or equivalent

Unix/Linux/Posix: Pentium processor

* For more information contact Therapeutic Guidelines Limited 1800 061 260.