

Doing one's job

Patients and healthcare professionals need to be able to count on an effective pharmaceutical industry. On pharmaceutical companies that market thoroughly evaluated drugs. Drugs that are more useful than dangerous and represent a tangible therapeutic advance in the indications for which they have been approved.

Patients and healthcare professionals should be able to count on pharmaceutical companies to consistently produce drugs that meet high quality standards. At the right strength. Easily stored.

Available on demand, supplied reliably and predictably, without delays, shortages or stockouts.

Patients and healthcare professionals should be able to count on pharmaceutical companies to supply their drugs in safe, informative and functional packaging that does not take up more of their time than necessary. In which the drug is clearly identified with its international nonproprietary name (INN), dose strength, and so on. In which the drug is accompanied, where appropriate, by a suitable device for its accurate preparation and administration. Together with a patient leaflet containing all the information patients need to have about their treatment, without alarming them, so that they can understand, monitor and benefit from it.

And all this must be achieved at prices that are reasonable, affordable and sustainable for health insurers and society as a whole. Without harming the environment.

It's a valuable job that requires expertise.

Every year, the Prescire Awards honour specific pharmaceutical companies that did their job, in a responsible manner, and provided a valuable service to healthcare professionals and patients (see pages 77-81 of this issue).

But what a shame it is when pharmaceutical companies stray beyond their remit! When they take control of the most critical clinical research, influence the initial and continuing education of healthcare professionals in universities and healthcare establishments (see page 82 of this issue), openly or surreptitiously advertise their products directly to patients, draining the resources of health insurers at the risk of compromising patients' access to health care, or put pressure on health authorities to rush their drugs onto the market despite the risks.

The entire health system should be able to count on pharmaceutical companies to do their job, no more, no less. When the roles within the system become blurred, the quality of health care and patients' freedom to choose according to their needs both suffer.

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EDITORIAL