



2020 Information Awards

The 2020 Prescrire Information Awards are based on the quality of the information and documentation provided to *Prescrire* by the pharmaceutical companies whose products we examined in 2020 in the New Products section of our French edition. They reflect the degree of transparency or secrecy companies have shown in response to *Prescrire's* requests for information and documentation.

Why does Prescrire ask companies for information? The information held by pharmaceutical companies concerning their drugs, from the developmental phase through post-marketing surveillance to market withdrawal, is important for patient care and patient safety. Among other benefits, sharing this information helps ensure that drugs are used appropriately and helps protect patients from certain harms. It is an integral part of a pharmaceutical company's responsibilities.

The main types of data *Prescrire* requests from pharmaceutical companies are: data on the drug's efficacy and adverse effects (assessment reports, pharmacovigilance data, updated clinical study reports); information about the conditions governing access to the drug, reimbursement of the cost by the national health insurance system, and the planned date of its market introduction (or market withdrawal) in France; and packaging materials, and so on. All of these data are compared with those obtained through the systematic literature search we defined.

Transparency varies widely. We requested information from 98 pharmaceutical companies in 2020. Some of them chose to be open, which they demonstrated by providing detailed, relevant information in response to *Prescrire's* requests. These companies earned a place on the 2020 Information Awards Honours List. Companies that provided *Prescrire* with particularly useful, detailed, explanatory information without delay, sometimes without being asked, were rated as "Outstanding".

Other drug companies failed to respond to some or all of our requests for information, or provided only limited data. Some of them delayed their response and provided no usable information. Some omitted the most relevant or sensitive data and chose to provide just a smattering of carefully chosen data, of little or no use for our analysis. Red Cards are given to highlight persistent and multiple deficiencies in the provision of information.

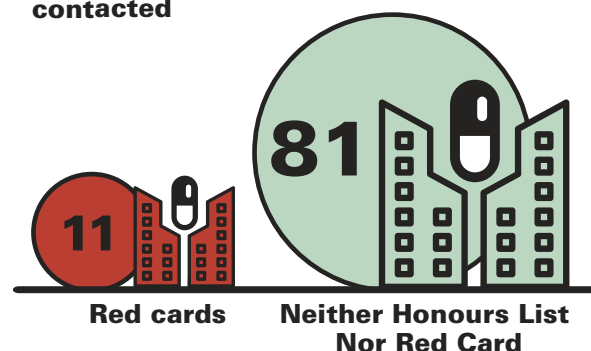
Providing information useful for health care is often a low priority. Pharmaceutical companies often lack the willingness rather than the resources to be transparent. When reviewing *fexinidazole* (Fexinidazole Winthrop®) in sleeping sickness caused by *Trypanosoma brucei gambiense* (see "2020 Prescrire Drug Awards" pp. 77-78), we requested information from the international non-profit organisation responsible for developing this drug, the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi). DNDi provided a range of information and documentation that helped explain the issues, including data from the drug's evaluation and development. In contrast, many pharmaceutical companies clearly attach little importance to providing non-promotional information. This was also apparent from the growing number of companies that outsourced this task to public relations agencies, not a choice one would immediately associate with transparency and high-quality information.

Secrecy still prevailed in 2020. The public health crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic made 2020 an extraordinary year, but it does not explain the failure of certain pharmaceutical companies to communicate with *Prescrire*. As in previous years, few pharmaceutical companies embraced transparency in 2020, agreeing to share the data in their possession. Most companies often preferred to be secretive, keeping relevant and detailed documentation to themselves, even though it is useful to healthcare professionals and, through them, to patients.

©Prescrire

Prescrire Information Awards

98 companies contacted



Honours List



Companies on the Honours List



Outstanding:

– Arrow Génériques



Followed by:

– Accord Healthcare
– Alnylam
– Bouchara Recordati
– EG Labo
– Medipha Santé



Red Cards

– Akcea Therapeutics
– Amgen
– Bayer Healthcare
– Gedeon Richter
– Génévrier
– Janssen Cilag

– Menarini
– MSD
– Sanofi Aventis
– Teva Santé
– X.O