

The Information Awards focus on the quality of the information provided to *Prescrire* by the pharmaceutical companies whose products we examined in the New Products section of our French edition during the previous year (in 2012: issues 339 to 350).



Prescrire's reviews dealing with new drugs and indications are based on a thorough literature search for documents relating to the drug's pre-approval assessment, especially clinical trial reports.

In addition to textbooks and bibliographic databases, *Prescrire* editors search the websites of drug regulatory agencies, health economics institutions, health technology assessment agencies and other institutions specialising in the relevant therapeutic field. *Prescrire* regularly asks drug regulatory agencies to provide specific information and unpublished documents. We also search other independent journals who are members of the International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB), and any independent institutions that have evaluated the drug in question.

Drug companies also hold a wealth of data. We also request relevant information from the companies that market each drug we analyse in France, to ensure that we take into account all data, including unpublished data, used to justify marketing approval or to modify an existing marketing authorisation. These unpublished data, such as expert reviews and Periodic Safety Update Reports (PSURs) are held both by the regulatory agency that examined the application and by the company that obtained marketing authorisation for its product.

As is the case with the other *Prescrire* Awards, a systematic and totally independent process is used to grant the Information Awards (rules available on our website, at english.prescrire.org).

Rewarding accountable companies. Some drug companies respond to our requests for information in a timely manner and provide us with thorough and relevant data, including unpublished data. These companies are placed on the Honours List. The companies rated as "Outstanding" provided us with exhaustive and detailed information, without delay and sometimes without being asked.

Honours List (in alphabetical order)

- Outstanding: **Ageps-EPHP, Janssen-Cilag**
- Followed by: **Addmedica, Chauvin, EG Labo, GlaxoSmithKline, Mayoly Spindler, Sanofi Pasteur MSD**

Red Cards (in alphabetical order)

- **Allergan, Bayer Santé, Biogen Idec, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, MSD, Servier, Takeda**

What do unhelpful companies have to hide? Other drug companies either fail to respond to our requests for information or provide only limited data. Some avoid responding for as long as possible and then fail to provide solid, exploitable data. Others fail to provide the most relevant data. Their usual pretexts include a lack of time, administrative delays, confidentiality issues, or a veto from their headquarters. Some companies appear to withhold information in retaliation for an unfavourable review in *Prescrire*.

"Red cards" are a way of highlighting persistent shortcomings in the provision of information by certain drug companies. These companies should rather take advantage of the opportunity offered by *Prescrire* to provide healthcare professionals with reliable information on their products.

2012: once again, no noteworthy improvement. The situation has barely changed over the years. Some companies continue to provide *Prescrire* with high-quality information, reflecting a responsible attitude towards patients and healthcare professionals. Others, unfortunately, place the accent on self-promotion and appear to see no need to provide thorough and reliable information on the products they market. They clearly fail to realize that a company's transparency is evidence of its credibility and is one of the criteria for choosing a particular drug, alongside efficacy, safety, usability, and price.

Some companies foster confusion between information and publicity. Their marketing documents are often biased and incomplete, being designed

more to boost sales than to ensure safe and effective patient care.

It is up to healthcare professionals to make sure the information they receive comes from trustworthy, independent sources. This will also reassure their patients.

Some companies expressed a willingness to change their policy following the Mediator^o disaster in France but that did not translate in tangible actions in 2012.

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Whenever we examine a new drug or indication, the review is accompanied by one of four pictograms rating the transparency of the company concerned for their response to our request for information about their product (for details search for "ratings system" online at english.prescrire.org).

