2021 Information Awards

Prescrire's annual Information Awards are based on the quality of the documentation and information provided by pharmaceutical companies in response to requests by Prescrire's Editorial Staff. Prescrire uses this documentation when analysing new products and preparing the articles published in the Marketing Authorisations section of our French edition. Using our systematic methodology, Prescrire compares and contrasts the information and data thus obtained with those gathered from various sources, including health authorities and the scientific literature.

What information do we request from pharmaceutical companies? Pharmaceutical companies hold a wealth of data on their drugs, from the earliest stages of development to market withdrawal: data that are useful to healthcare professionals and patients by helping them use drugs appropriately and as safely as possible. *Prescrire*'s information-gathering strategy includes asking pharmaceutical companies to send us information about their drug, in particular: evaluation data on its efficacy, adverse effects and interactions (detailed clinical study reports, pharmacovigilance data, and data submitted to health authorities); packaging items; the conditions under which patients can access the drug, and the planned date of its market introduction or the reasons for its market withdrawal.

Only 3 of the 84 companies contacted made this year's Honours List. Prescrire requested information from 84 pharmaceutical companies in 2021. Three of them earned a place on this year's Honours List for regularly providing high-quality information in a timely manner: Arrow Génériques, Accord Healthcare and EG Labo. And one of these three companies, Arrow Génériques, was rated "Outstanding" for also providing particularly significant information.

At the other end of the scale, 17 companies chose not to send us information. They failed to respond to our repeated requests or provided only occasional, cursory documentation. These companies received an information "Red Card" (see opposite).

Covid-19 vaccines: selective disclosure of information. 2021 was marked by the rapid roll-out of covid-19 vaccines. The pharmaceutical companies concerned, mainly AstraZeneca, Janssen-Cilag, Moderna and Pfizer, made regular announcements about the efficacy of their vaccines, often in press releases, sometimes even before publishing the results of the trials in peer-reviewed scientific journals. This constant stream of announcements contrasts with the lack of information sent to Prescrire, despite multiple specific requests. Only two companies responded: Moderna simply sent us the summary of product characteristics (SPC) for its vaccine; and Pfizer sent us links to websites referring to otherwise easily obtainable administrative data and published documents. Given the level of mistrust of covid-19 vaccines in some quarters, it would have been preferable if pharmaceutical companies had promptly shared the scientific data generated to evaluate their vaccine's efficacy and the data collected on its adverse effects with independent teams such as Prescrire, enabling them to issue independent conclusions on these results and the uncertainties that still remain.

Access to data held by the pharmaceutical industry was still insufficient in 2021. As in previous years, many pharmaceutical companies chose not to share the useful data in their possession with Prescrire, and not to allow an independent team to conduct its own analysis. Sharing relevant information with all stakeholders on the evaluation of efficacy, known adverse effects and packaging enables health care to be based on the most comprehensive scientific evidence possible, without hiding the uncertainties.
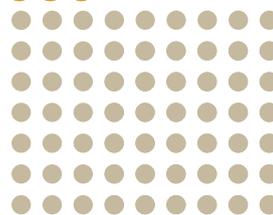
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Prescrire Information Awards

Of the 84 companies we contacted for information

3 companies made the Honours List

64 companies not on the Honours List but not given a Red Card

17 companies given a Red Card

Honours List

Arrow Génériques (Outstanding)

Accord Healthcare

EG Labo

Red Cards

Alexion, ALK-Abelló, Almirall, Bailleul, Bayer Healthcare, Biocodex, Centre Spécialités Pharmaceutiques, Gedeon Richter, Janssen Cilag, Kyowa Kirin Pharma, Menarini, MSD, Omega Pharma, Pharmablue, Sanofi Aventis, Shionogi, Teva Santé