Monitoring and searching the literature

In order to provide timely information to our subscribers, *Prescrire* has to stay one step ahead of new developments. This gives our teams sufficient time to complete our collaborative process of analysis and verification, and to inform our readers. It also helps us prioritise certain projects and adapt our priorities when necessary.

Our ability to stay one step ahead relies on *Prescrire*'s in-house system for monitoring relevant publications, with the goal of remaining constantly open and attentive to the numerous changes, trends and prospects in the field of healthcare, in its broadest sense.

In the field of pharmaceuticals, we need to monitor and analyse market trends, clinical trials, pharmacovigilance and pharmacoepidemiological data, regulatory affairs, investor news about drug company successes and failures, drug regulatory agencies' agendas and activities, the positions and actions of health technology assessment bodies, drug companies' promotional activities and marketing strategies, and pharmaceutical policy at the national, European and global levels.

Similarly, in order to monitor practice conditions in the health professions, we constantly keep abreast of determining factors as varied as health-related legislation, trends in the various practice types, patient advocacy group campaigns, positions adopted by professional associations, ethical issues relating to healthcare, the epidemiology of numerous conditions and an array of other public health data, the activities of health insurance organisations, and so on.

To improve our monitoring methods and remain attentive to changes, we must continuously examine and sift through a great deal of information. *Prescrire*'s monitoring system relies on a large team with a wide range of skills: they select sources of information for systematic monitoring, and divide examination of these sources among the team; analyse new data to determine what they add to the existing body of knowledge; share information within the team and various networks; collectively choose which information to publish; and develop literature search strategies.

The purpose of this dynamic, attentive, evolving process is to improve healthcare by offering our subscribers up-to-date knowledge, which they can apply to their day-to-day work.

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EDITORIAL

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