EDITORIAL

Drugs to avoid in 2026

Prescrire has published its fourteenth consecutive review of drugs to avoid. This annually updated review, with supporting references, identifies drugs that are more dangerous than beneficial in all the clinical situations in which they are authorised in France or in the European Union.

One of Prescrire's main objectives is to provide health professionals (and thereby their patients) with clear, independent, reliable and up-to-date information that is free from conflicts of interest and supports high-quality care. Our annual review of drugs to avoid helps health professionals avoid harming patients or exposing them to disproportionate risks.

A drug's harm-benefit balance and its place in therapy must be continually re-evaluated as new data on efficacy or adverse effects and new drugs become available. Not all drugs are equal, and not all new drugs represent a clinical advance. Some drugs are useful in certain situations, offering a therapeutic advantage over other available treatment options, while other drugs are more dangerous than beneficial and should never be used.

Prescrire's assessments of drugs and indications are based on a systematic and reproducible literature search, and collective analysis of the resulting data by our Editorial Staff, using an established procedure:

– Efficacy data are ranked, with most weight given to those from studies that provide the highest level of evidence, i.e. double-blind randomised controlled trials;

– The drug is compared with the standard treatment (not necessarily a drug) when one exists, after careful determination of the best comparator;

– The efficacy results analysed are those that evaluate the clinical outcomes that matter most to the patients concerned (such as mortality, the most troublesome symptoms, or quality of life, depending on the situation), or, in some cases, surrogate outcomes (such as laboratory markers or imaging findings) that have been shown to correlate with relevant clinical outcomes;

– Data on the drug's adverse effects are carefully analysed: they initially consist of the various safety signals that emerged during clinical trials, the drug's pharmacological similarity to other substances, and the results of animal pharmacotoxicology studies, but they evolve and consolidate over time, a process that may take several years of use in a large number of patients.

108 of the drugs examined by Prescrire between 2010 and 2025, and that are authorised in France or in the European Union, are more dangerous than beneficial in all their authorised indications. See pages 54-55 of this issue for more details and the main differences between the 2025 and 2026 versions, or download the full version (12 pages) from english.prescrire.org (FREE).

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