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With more follow-up

Healthcare professionals are constantly bombarded with "new" treatments, most of which simply benefit drug companies' commercial interests and do not represent true innovation. Nevertheless, healthcare professionals must keep an open mind and consider the possible advantages of each new product over existing options. Sometimes, new drugs represent a real therapeutic advance for patients with a specific disorder.

A close look at the initial assessment data is generally sufficient to get an idea of the place of a new product in relation to existing therapeutic options.

Prescrire's New Products section is designed to help subscribers identify true therapeutic advances among the plethora of new products arriving on the market. Healthcare professionals can save a considerable amount of time, even by skimming through *Prescrire*'s analyses, time which can be committed to their patients' well-being. Our readers can rest assured that *Prescrire*'s conclusions are backed up by the independence of an editorial team, sound analytical procedures, and an emphasis on patient care.

Yet as new data accumulate, yesterday's certainties must be periodically called into question. In the field of drug evaluation, pre-marketing studies leave many questions unanswered. In particular, adverse effects tend to be under-estimated or may go undetected. And post-marketing follow-up has even been known to reveal unexpected benefits.

With more follow-up, some statins have emerged as the standard cholesterol-lowering drugs.

With more follow-up, the negative risk-benefit balance of glitazones has been confirmed, and that of the *dextropropoxyphene + paracetamol* combination has become less and less favourable.

With more follow-up, the cardiovascular adverse effects of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are emerging as an even greater problem than their gastrointestinal adverse effects. Meanwhile, erythropoietins are being linked to excess mortality.

These are but a few examples of how the risk-benefit balance of a drug can evolve as we have more experience with its use.

Several times a year, *Prescrire's* New Products section presents "Second look" analyses of selected drugs. Other new products and practices are also regularly re-examined in the journal.

Close follow-up, critical re-evaluation, and an open mind: all these spell progress.

In healthcare too, it is best to mistrust too-established thinking. A second look with more follow-up can act as a springboard. To create movement, to stay alive.

Prescrire

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