

Media release**3 April 2003**

Why are global drug prices so high... & other questions

In the April edition of *Australian Prescriber* Dr Mary Moran from Médecins Sans Frontières, United Kingdom, examines why pharmaceutical industry strategies compromise access to essential medicines in developing countries.

The balance between profitability, choice, effectiveness, affordability and access is sometimes skewed by competing priorities.

“Pharmaceutical industry strategies make commercial sense, but, particularly in developing countries, they can also conflict with what is best for public health,” said Dr Moran.

The top 10 best selling brand drugs worldwide are for depression, cholesterol, high blood pressure, hay fever, heartburn and ulcers. In her article Dr Moran explains why these diseases attract more drug company attention than equally common diseases affecting major population groups globally.

The focus on high-profit drugs and diseases results in less research activity for tropical and other endemic diseases. It also stimulates growth of ‘me-too’ drugs that are marketed as exciting new advances, even though most have little or no proven advantage over existing therapies.

Dr Moran speaks quite frankly on the apparent imbalance between money spent on research and on promotion of new drugs.

“We are allowing the private sector industry, that has other interests at heart, to set the agenda on public health. It is up to health professionals and governments to ensure that issues relating to health, not just wealth, are on the table when decisions affecting drug access are made” she said.

In the same issue of *Australian Prescriber* Associate Professor Louise Baur looks at childhood obesity and Robert Horvath and Peter Collignon write about intravascular catheter infections.

You can access the complete article at the *Australian Prescriber* web site www.australianprescriber.com *Australian Prescriber*, an independent review journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals, is published by the National Prescribing Service (NPS). The NPS is an independent Australian organisation for Quality Use of Medicines. For further information about the NPS visit the web site www.nps.org.au

For more information about your medicines consumers can contact *Medicines Line* on 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday between 9am and 6pm EST for the cost of a local call. *Medicines Line* gives confidential information about prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, herbal and natural therapies and is provided by the NPS.

For further information or expert commentary about this article please contact Miriam Fletcher at NPS on (02) 9699 4499 or 0417 422 420 or by email at mfletcher@nps.org.au.

CP.04.03