WHO ethical criteria for medicinal drug promotion

The Forty-seventh World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA41.17, WHA43.20 and WHA45.30;

Noting the continued need to improve the quality of drug promotion through the use of the concepts embodied in the WHO Ethical Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion;

Having considered the report of the Director-General\(^1\) on the outcome of the CIOMS/WHO Consultation on the WHO Ethical Criteria,

1. THANKS the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) for having convened the consultation in collaboration with WHO, and for the valuable report adopted by consensus and which covers a wide range of issues and the action to be taken;

2. APPRECIATES the commitment of the participants - drug regulatory authorities, pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, health professionals, universities and teaching institutions, professional associations, patient and consumer groups, and the professional and general media - to a common responsibility, based on fundamental ethical principles, for the well-being of patients individually and the public collectively;

3. ENDORSES the report of the consultation and reaffirms:

   (1) that the regulation of drugs must ensure not only the safety, efficacy and quality of drugs but also the accuracy of the information provided pursuant to their regulation;

   (2) that patients, pharmacists and prescribers should have access to appropriate and understandable information about drugs and their side-effects;

   (3) that the promotion of drugs must be accurate, fair and objective, and presented in such a way as to conform to legal requirements and also to high ethical standards;

   (4) that promotional claims should not be stronger than valid, up-to-date scientific evidence warrants, every effort being made to avoid ambiguity;

\(^1\) Document A47/7.
(5) that information for patients and prescribers which appears in leaflets of drugs in the manufacturing country should be supplied by the manufacturer to the countries to which the same drugs are exported;

4. CALLS UPON all concerned parties to continue to collaborate in order to promote further and implement the principles embodied in WHO's Ethical Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion, by rapidly adopting, as appropriate, measures based on the CIOMS/WHO recommendations;

5. URGES Member States to develop and implement national mechanisms, where relevant, to control drug promotion in accordance with the principles embodied in the WHO Ethical Criteria, and as proposed in the WHO Certification Scheme;

6. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to implement the recommendations of the CIOMS/WHO consultation applicable to WHO, giving special attention to:

(a) wide dissemination of the WHO Ethical Criteria to all Member States and all other concerned parties;

(b) measures to develop and disseminate educational materials on the WHO Ethical Criteria, and methods to monitor their implementation;

(c) monitoring the implementation of the WHO Ethical Criteria and collecting information on voluntary, self-regulatory national and international codes and guidelines that relate to the promotion of medicinal drugs, in consultation with all concerned parties;

(d) carrying out studies or surveys of current promotional practices as necessary, and analysis of the effectiveness of the Ethical Criteria;

(e) support to Member States, as appropriate, in strengthening drug regulatory capacity and mechanisms regarding the labelling and promotion of medicinal drugs;

(f) dissemination of national experience in the promotion of medicinal drugs;

(g) alert Member States to the importance of this role for universities and other educational institutions and assist them in educational programme development;

(h) periodical review of the WHO Ethical Criteria in consultation with interested parties;

(2) to report regularly, through the Executive Board, on progress made and problems encountered by WHO and Member States, as part of the reporting on the implementation of the revised drug strategy.

Thirteenth plenary meeting, 11 May 1994
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