



THE NETWORK'S NEWS LETTER

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ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL USE
OF MEDICATION IN PAKISTAN

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The First Step

The Network has been trying to draw the attention of Ministry of Health to the havoc caused by de-controlling the prices of medicines in June of last year. As feared, the prices of most of the drugs have gone beyond the reach of ordinary people. In certain cases, the rise was more than 300%. With the induction of a new government and changes in the Ministry, the Federal Secretary of Health took notice of the issue and called a meeting in January this year in which representatives of

the industry and the Network were invited. It was decided in the meeting that the frequent increase in the drug prices should stop forth with and the prices should be frozen at the January level until 30 June 1994.

Secondly, the prices would be reviewed and where it was found that the prices have risen abnormally, they would be brought down. The Secretary also appointed a Committee to review the whole situation of the price structure and other drug regulation issues. The Committee set forth immediately and presented reports on various aspects of the situation including drug policy, drug prices and its monitoring, availability of essential drugs and drug quality. A number of useful suggestions have been forwarded to the Ministry in these areas and now it is hoped that the Government will take immediate and long term decisions to not only bring down the prices of the drugs but also ensure that essential drugs are readily available and the quality of the drugs is also maintained.

We hope that this First Step of the Ministry will lead to the formation of a rational and comprehensive National Drug Policy covering all the various areas that have been pointed out by the Committee through their reports.

Prof. Tariq Iqbal Bhutta

The Network News

* TWO SEMINARS ON RATIONAL USE OF DRUGS:

As part of its wider programme to sensitize health professionals on rational use of drugs, The Network conducted two seminars in the months of November 1993 and December 1993 at King Edward Medical College, Lahore and Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad, respectively.

Specialists from these institutes, dwelled upon the appropriate use of drugs in their specialities. Both seminars were well attended with an audience ranging from young house officers to senior practitioners. Papers were presented on rational use of drugs in psychiatry, cardiology and dermatology. Along with that there were very interesting papers on "Difficulties in rational prescribing in general practice", "Antibiotics Vs Antimicrobials", "Essential drug concept", "Paediatric therapeutics - far from the ideal", "Rational use of drugs in ARI" and "Cost-effectiveness in drug therapy". Speakers included Prof. I.A.K. Tareen, Dr. Samiullah Sh., Prof. Ishfaq Khan, Prof. Tariq Iqbal Bhutta, Mr. Anjum Shafi, Dr. Shaheena Quraishy, Dr. Mehrul Hasnain, Dr. Hamid Zaib, Prof. Mushtaq A. Khan and Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Mehmud Ahmad Akhtar.

* PAPER PRESENTATION IN CPSP CONGRESS '93:

The Network Coordinator was invited by College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSP) for presenting a paper on "Role of NGOs in promotion of rational use of drugs" in symposium on "Uses and abuses of drugs" which was a part of Congress '93. The symposium was also attended by Dr. Bala, Pharmaceutical Adviser to IOCU and Dr. Abdul Aziz Saleh from WHO/EMRO and other prominent national health professionals along with representatives of few pharmaceutical companies. CPSP is publishing the proceedings of the Congress along with the papers presented during various sessions and symposia.

* XII BIENNIAL NATIONAL PAEDIATRIC CONFERENCE, LAHORE:

The Network collaborated with Pakistan Paediatric

Association (PPA) to hold a symposium on rational use of drugs during recently held XII Biennial National Paediatric Conference in Lahore. Dr. Bala from IOCU, Malaysia, Dr. Ken Harvey from Australia, José Martines from WHO, Geneva and Professor Bhutta made excellent presentations. The symposium was not well attended, however, an outcome is a set of very useful recommendations.

Thanks to Dr. Ken Harvey for his contribution.

* NETWORK'S NATIONAL LAUNCHING OF "PROBLEM DRUG" PACK:

On 13 December 1993, The Network introduced the "Problem Drug" pack to Pakistan at a launching ceremony at Karachi Press Club. The "Problem Drug" pack is a rich source of information on different drug issues and their usage. It is written by Andrew Cheatley and is published by Health Action International (HAI), The Netherlands. It has been launched in many countries and has received wide coverage through print and electronic media. The Network was one of the reviewers of this international pack. During the launch at Karachi, a panel of experts was formed to answer queries from the press. The panel included Dr. Balasubramaniam, Dr. Akhlaq un Nabi Khan, Dr. Inayat Khan and Dr. Sh. Tanveer Ahmed. Press packs, in the form of features, both in Urdu and English were distributed among the journalists. An introduction to the pack was given by the Coordinator with special reference to the local drug use situation after which the panel replied to questions. This event was very effectively covered by various important dailies and created many waves at different levels.

Request forms for the actual pack and copies of press pack for journalists can be obtained from The Network's office.

* DRAMA WORKSHOP FOR HEALTH WORKERS FROM NGOS:

From 15 to 22 December 1993, The Network conducted 8 days drama workshop on rational use of drugs. There were eleven participants from six NGOs, namely; Pattan Development Organization, Sind Graduate Association, St. Teresa's Hospital, Sungi

