



ISDB INFORMATION BOOKLET

Independence from drug companies is a key element of our policy



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BACKGROUND

The International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB) is a worldwide network of bulletins and journals on drugs and therapeutics that are financially and intellectually independent of the pharmaceutical industry. Founded in 1986 with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, the main priorities of ISDB are to encourage and assist in the development of independent drug bulletins throughout the world and to promote and maintain cooperation and communication among them.

Drug bulletins were introduced in the 1960s, when pharmaceutical research was leading to new drugs that were changing the practice of medicine. At about this time, the 'thalidomide disaster' forced the world to pay much greater attention to risks and harms associated with inappropriate drug promotion and use. Since then the number of drug bulletins has steadily increased.

Drug bulletins aim to improve health care quality by providing relevant information about treatments (i.e. reliable, comparative, and adapted to users' needs), and promoting more rational, informed decisions about their use. The primary audience for most bulletins comprises doctors and pharmacists, but also and increasingly consumers. ISDB members often deal also with broader drug policy issues.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the society is to:

- encourage and further the development of independent drug bulletins
- promote international exchange of good-quality information concerning drugs and therapeutics
- network with organisations involved in rational use of drugs
- engage in whatever ancillary activities the ISDB committee considers desirable for the furtherance of these primary purposes.

ISDB priorities are to:

- help all independent drug bulletins achieve the highest professional standards
- support the development of new independent drug bulletins
- encourage members to help health professionals communicate more effectively with consumers
- identify independent drug bulletins that are not part of the ISDB network and develop a relationship with them.

CONSTITUTION

The operation of the society is governed by a constitution. It sets out the requirements for membership, and procedural matters relating to the appointment and role of the ISDB committee, voting, meetings and society rules. The constitution is available through the 'About ISDB' section of the website <www.isdbweb.org>.

MEMBERSHIP OF ISDB

ISDB has two categories of members: full members and associate members. Full members meet all membership requirements as set out in the ISDB constitution. Associate members are institutions or individuals who do not meet all criteria for full membership, but who are sympathetic to the aims of the society.

ISDB, with WHO support for publishing, edited and published *Starting or Strengthening a Drug Bulletin. A Practical Manual*. The manual, which is freely available on the ISDB website, is a valuable tool for people wanting to create bulletins, or improve their editing process, and become ISDB members.

FULL MEMBERS

The main requirements for membership are editorial and financial independence, and the publication of good-quality information. The information must help users to optimise their therapeutic activity in the best interests of their patients.

To be eligible for full membership of ISDB, a bulletin must meet certain criteria that demonstrate its independence:

- it must be run by an independent editorial team, working within an organisational structure able to guarantee editorial independence
- it must have financial resources that guarantee independence, such as public financing through a national or local government, financing by a non-governmental organisation, or self-financing through reader subscriptions or membership fees
- it must produce a periodical concerned with the promotion of rational drug therapy
- it must carry no advertising relating to therapeutic or diagnostic activities.

ISDB has 62 members representing 33 countries, which are grouped into the following regions:

Regions	Number of bulletins	Number of countries
European countries	37	15
Middle East and West Asia	12	8
East Asia and Pacific	7	5
North, South and Central America	5	4
Africa	1	1

A list of current members is given in Appendix 1. Full contact details are available on the ‘Members’ section of the ISDB website <www.isdbweb.org>.

Full member bulletins can carry the society’s logo on their publication as a mark of quality and independence.

Each member of the society is periodically reviewed by the committee to check that they continue to fulfil all the requirements and undertakings specified in Article 4.1.1 of the ISDB constitution.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Institutions and individuals not qualified to be full members may acquire the status of associate members of the society.

They have the same rights and obligations of full members except those of voting, standing for office and use of the society’s logo. Associate members do have the right to:

- receive the ISDB newsletter
- use the ISDB communication network
- access all sections of the ISDB website.

There are currently 18 associate members representing 16 countries:

Regions	Number of bulletins	Number of countries
European countries	7	6
Middle East and West Asia	5	4
East Asia and Pacific	1	1
North, South and Central America	3	3
Africa	2	2

A list of current associate members is given in Appendix 2. Full contact details are available on the ‘Members’ section of the ISDB website <www.isdbweb.org>.

HOW TO JOIN

An application for admission must comprise:

- two copies of each of the last five consecutive issues of the bulletin preceding the date of application. If the issues do not specify the contents in English then a list of these contents, including keywords, shall be sent with the issues
- an English translation of two articles from the last bulletin, if the bulletin is not published in English
- a completed application form
- the admission fee (which will be refunded if the application is not accepted).

The Committee may request further information to assist it in making its decision.

Bulletins aimed at patients or published electronically can become member bulletins provided they meet the criteria for membership.

The application form and other information are available on the 'How to join' section of the website <www.isdbweb.org>.

MANAGEMENT OF ISDB BUSINESS

The operation of the society is overseen by a committee. Members of the committee are elected at the three-yearly general assembly. Regional coordinators are appointed from the committee to liaise with and represent members in the various regions.

WORK OF THE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

ISDB publishes a newsletter to inform members of the society's business. The newsletter is published at least three times per year and distributed to all members and associate members free-of-charge by email (and by post to those who have no Internet access).

The newsletter serves to:

- keep members and associate members informed of current editorial standards for the development of articles and information
- keep members and associate members informed of current issues and activities
- facilitate communication between members.

The newsletter is also posted on the website <www.isdbweb.org>.

WEBSITE <WWW.ISDBWEB.ORG>

The society's website contains information about the formation and structure of ISDB, its committee and constitution, publications of general interest (including the ISDB declarations and the ISDB newsletters), a directory of members and links to members' websites, and details about how to join the society.

It also provides a password-protected area accessible only to members and associate members, in which information can be shared. This section contains a library of member bulletins' contents, a discussion forum and alerts.

MEETINGS

ISDB holds a general assembly every three years, which provides an excellent forum for members to meet and exchange information. It also allows ISDB members to meet with

other people involved in rational use of drugs and other publishers of independent drug and therapeutics information who are not already part of the ISDB network.

To help independent drug bulletins achieve high professional standards, ISDB organises regional workshops where people working on long established bulletins can share their experience with those starting new ones. Such meetings have been held in Algeria, Hungary, Latvia, Italy, Japan, Philippines, the Netherlands, Spain and Nepal.

To support the development of new drug bulletins, ISDB members also host visits from editors starting up new bulletins to help them gain experience as trainees.

ISDB PUBLICATIONS

Through its meetings, workshops and newsletters, ISDB encourages and facilitates discussion on:

- sources of information
- transparency of and access to evaluation data
- management of conflicts of interest
- organisational structure
- ways that bulletins can help health professionals communicate more effectively with consumers
- ways to ensure independence according to available financial resources (based on subscription only, public funding, sponsored by health authorities, etc.)
- any other support for bulletins faced with particular difficulties.

As a result of these collaborations a number of documents have been produced. The following are available on the ISDB website:

- “Patient information” by pharmaceutical companies comes up against almost unanimous opposition from civil society
June 2008
- Pharmacovigilance in Europe: overwhelming opposition to the EU Commission’s proposals
May 2008
- Time to act for patient safety in Europe
May 2008
- New European pharmacovigilance legislation: getting it right
Feb 2008
- ISDB statement on information independence
March 2007

- Relevant health information for empowered citizens
Joint declaration of Health Action International (HAI) Europe, ISDB, Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM), the European consumers' organisation (BEUC), and the Medicines in Europe Forum
October 2006
- Independence: what's the point?
September 2005
- Starting on strengthening a drug bulletin. A practical manual
September 2005
- ISDB EU: Berlin declaration on pharmacovigilance (English, German, French, Italian)
January 2005
- ISDB declaration on therapeutic advance in the use of medicines (English, German, French, Italian, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish)
November 2001

ISDB has also published a number of press releases on relevant issues related to drugs and other information. They are available on the ISDB website.

ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

To address public health and drug information issues, ISDB has developed links with many relevant organisations with members being involved in various activities and campaigns. Topics of particular interest are: access to information about medicines, including access to unpublished data held by drug regulatory agencies; the increasing influence of transnational corporations on regulatory authorities and the World Health Organization; and the impact of undue promotion by the pharmaceutical industry.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other ISDB activities include the exchange of information on new drugs, adverse effects, and drug promotion and regulation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about ISDB can be obtained from:

President, ISDB

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APPENDIX 1. FULL MEMBERS OF ISDB BY REGION

Bulletin	Member	Country
<i>Europe</i>		
Pharmainformation	Hans Winkler	Austria
Folia Pharmacotherapeutica	Marc Bogaert	Belgium
Le Lettre du Gras	Marc Bouniton	Belgium
MINERVA	Pierre Chevalier	Belgium
Projekt Farmaka	Katlyn De Valck	Belgium
Bilten O Lijekovima & Pharmaca	Bozidar Vrhovac Ksenija Makar-Ausperger	Croatia
Farmakoterapeutické Informace	Blanka Pospisilova	Czech Republic
Bulletin d'Information du Medicament et de Pharmacovigilance	Michel le Duff	France
Bulletins d'Information de Pharmacologie (BIP31.fr)	Jean Louis Montastruc	France
La revue Prescrire	Christophe Kopp	France
Arznei-Telegramm	Wolfgang Becker-Brueser	Germany
Arzneiverordnung in der Praxis	Univ.-Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dieter Ludwig	Germany
Der Arzneimittelbrief	Dietrich von Herrath Walter Thimme	Germany
Pharma-Brief	Jörg Schaaber	Germany
Dialogo sui Farmaci	Maria Font	Italy
Focus	Giampaolo Velo	Italy
Informazione sui Farmaci	Daniela Zanfi	Italy
Ricerca & Pratica	Maurizio Bonati	Italy
Pacchetti Informativi Ceveas	Nicola Magrini	Italy
Cito!	Inga Gaile	Latvia

APPENDIX 1. FULL MEMBERS OF ISDB BY REGION (cont.)

Bulletin	Member	Country
<i>Europe (cont.)</i>		
MEDEX	Natalia Cebotarenco	Moldova
Geneesmiddelenbulletin	Dick Bijl	The Netherlands
Boletín de Información Terapéutica de Navarra (BIT)	Juan Erviti	Spain
Boletín de uso Racional del Medicamento	Ana Sangrador Rasero	Spain
Boletín Terapéutico Andaluz	José María Récalde-Manrique	Spain
Bulleti Groc	Joan-Ramon Laporte	Spain
Bulleti d'Informació Terapéutica	Neus Rams	Spain
Informació Farmacoterapéutica Vasca (INFAC)	Iñigo Aizpurua	Spain
Notas Farmacoterapéuticas	Luis Carlos Saiz Fernández	Spain
Pharmakon	Mercedes Aza Pascual-Salcedo	Spain
Farmakon	Jelka Dolinar	Slovenia
Drugwatcher	Lars-Olof Hensjo Christer V Bahr	Sweden
Informatio from Lakermedelsverket	Ursula Forner	Sweden
Farmaka i Focus	Teresa Alton Borgelin Jan Hasselstrom	Sweden
Pharma-Flash	Jules Desmeules	Switzerland
Pharma-Kritik (Infomed)	Etzel Gysling	Switzerland
Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin	Hellen Barnett	UK
<i>Middle East & West Asia</i>		
Drug & Health	Zahed Md Masud	Bangladesh
BODHI & Asukh Bisukh	Pijus K Sarkar Siddhartha Gupta	India

APPENDIX 1. FULL MEMBERS OF ISDB BY REGION (cont.)

Bulletin	Member	Country
<i>Middle East & West Asia (cont.)</i>		
Drugs Bulletin	Promila Pandhi	India
Rational Drug Bulletin	Amitava Guha	India
DIC Newsletter	PK Lakshmi & Sri. S. B. Gore	India
Pharma Drug Bulletin	Philip Sax	Israel
Drugs Bulletin	Bakytgul Ermekbayeva	Kazakhstan
Drug Bulletin	Saliya Karymbaeva	Kyrgyzstan
Drug and Therapeutics Letter	Professor KK Kafle	Nepal
Drug Bulletin of Nepal	Santosh K. C.	Nepal
The Network's Watch on Medicines	Dr Talib Lashari	Pakistan
Sri Lanka Prescriber	Gita Fernando	Sri Lanka
<i>East Asia & Pacific</i>		
Australian Prescriber	John Dowden	Australia
Therapeutic Guidelines	Mary Hemming	Australia
Lembaran Obat dan Pengobatan	Dr Siti Munawaroh	Indonesia
The Informed Prescriber	Hirokuni Beppu	Japan
Kusuri-no-Check	Keiko Sakaguchi Rokuro Hama	Japan
Prescriber Update	Sarita von Afehl	New Zealand
RDU Update	Isidro Sia	Philippines
<i>North, South & Central America</i>		
Therapeutics Initiative	Ciprian D Jauca	Canada
INVIMA Bulletin of Pharmacovigilance	Claudia P Vaca	Colombia
Boletin AIS-COIME	Benoit Marchand Carlos Berrios	Nicaragua

APPENDIX 1. FULL MEMBERS OF ISDB BY REGION (cont.)

Bulletin	Member	Country
<i>North, South & Central America (cont.)</i>		
Boletin Farmacos	Nuria Homedes	USA
Worst Pills Best Pills	Sidney Wolfe	USA
<i>Africa</i>		
La lettre du CEDIM	Clotaire Nanga Patrick Kafando	Burkina Faso
<i>Honorary full members</i>		
	Joe Collier	UK
	Andrew Herxheimer	UK

APPENDIX 2. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF ISDB BY REGION

Bulletin	Associate Member	Country
<i>Europe</i>		
Ravimiinfo Bulletaan	Kristin Raudsepp	Estonia
Dossier du CNHIM	Marie-Caroline Husson	France
Drugs Today	Zaza V Chapichadze	Georgia
Arzeimittel Therapie Kritik	Gunther Samitz	Germany
Centro d'Informazione sul Farmaco	Giovanna Scroccaro	Italy
Health Action International (HAI) Europe	Rose de Groot	The Netherlands
Pharma Selecta	Jos Luers	The Netherlands
<i>Middle East & West Asia</i>		
Drugs and Medicines	Dr. Anahit Ayvazyan	Armenia
Drug's Today	Alfred Edwards	India
Resume	Guru Prasad Mohanta	India
Drug Information Bulletin	Pranaya Mishra	Nepal
HAI (Asia Pacific)	Passana Guanasekera	Sri Lanka
<i>East Asia & Pacific</i>		
Healthy Skepticism	Peter Mansfield	Australia
<i>North, South & Central America</i>		
Boletín de información terapéutica para atención primaria de salud	Dulce Maria Calvo Barbado	Cuba
Revista Farmacos	Albin Chaves Matamoros	Costa Rica
Correo de AIS	Roberto Lopez Linares	Perù
<i>Africa</i>		
	Jean René Randriasamimanana	Madagascar
Drug Bulletine	Seare Ghebreyesus	Eritrea