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## BOOK REVIEW

### WHO Medicines Bookshelf Version 5.0: A Review

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Essential medicines and rational use of medicines are becoming an important issue all over the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) and many other organizations publish a number of books on this important topic. The WHO Medicines Bookshelf is an initiative to bring together these publications on one platform providing easy access to readers. The first author had previously published a review of version 4.0 of the WHO Medicines Bookshelf in the Indian Journal of Pharmacology [1]. We, routinely, use the Bookshelf and found it gave easy access to a number of WHO publications related to essential medicines and rational medicines use. Recently a new version of the CD-ROM (Version 5.0) has been released.

The new version retains the essential features of the previous one. The entire contents of the CD-ROM can be installed on your computer hard disk so that you can access contents without further use of the CD-ROM. There is an option for compact installation which requires the CD-ROM to be present each time, before you can access the bookshelf on your computer. The CD-ROM has been produced by the WHO Departments of Medicines Policy and Standards and Technical Cooperation for Essential Drugs and Traditional Medicine with the help of Human Info NGO and the University of Waikato, New Zealand.

The basic design of the bookshelf (library) is similar to a web page. The 'home page' contains a help section and the option of three languages: English, French and Spanish, in which to view the contents. There is a small window which shows various publications in sequence. The reader can click on the cover to read the publication. We found this to be an excellent feature. There are multiple search facilities. The reader can access publications by subject through a link on the home page. Like in the previous version, there are twelve subjects, ranging from Essential medicines, National drug policy, Selection and use of medicines, HIV medicines and Quality assurance and drug safety among others. The publications in the bookshelf can also be accessed alphabetically through titles. There is a separate section for periodicals.

The organizations section on the home page contains the publications of various organizations like Cambridge University Press, Elsevier Science Publishers, Health Action International, Management Sciences for Health, The Uppsala Monitoring Centre and various offices of the WHO. We especially liked the button for returning back to the home page after navigating to various sections. There is a hyperlink to the WHO Essential Drugs and Medicines (EDM) website. The EDM interface contains links to medicines arranged alphabetically and according to various sections. If the reader is connected to the internet he/she can access the latest editions of the essential medicines list of various countries.

This version differs from the previous one in addition of new medicines related publications. The proceedings of

international conferences of drug regulatory authorities will be of interest to selected readers. A brief booklet on counterfeit drugs addresses an increasingly important topic. 'Determining the patent status of essential medicines in developing countries' contains useful information for national drug regulators and public health authorities, to avail for patent exemption under World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations. 'Developing pharmacy practice' and 'Drug promotion' are new books included in this version. The handbook on good clinical research practice, improving management of an essential drugs program by regular surveys, pharmacovigilance for antiretrovirals in resource poor settings, an international comparison of the price, availability and affordability of medicines for chronic diseases, using indicators to measure country pharmaceutical situation, WHO training modules on good manufacturing practices are among the new publications added.

The strength of the bookshelf is its ability to cater to diverse interests. The WHO Model Formulary serves as an important source of impartial, objective information for the practicing clinician. Adherence to long term therapies – Evidence for action, Containing anti-microbial resistance, Counterfeit drugs kill, Drugs and money, Guide to good prescribing, Guiding principles to ensure injection device security, Handbook for good clinical research practice, Price, availability and affordability of chronic disease medications, Priority medicines for Europe and the world, Promoting safety of medicines for children and publications on pharmacovigilance will be of particular interest. Books and manuscripts are available in both HTML and PDF formats for most publications. Certain training material is available in PowerPoint format.

The bookshelf will also be useful to medical and health science educators, public health experts, pharmacologists and pharmacists. The bookshelf provides quick and easy access to a number of publications related to

essential medicines and rational use of medicines. The people and the organizations involved require congratulations on an excellent effort which builds on the strengths of the previous version.

### About the Bookshelf

WHO Medicines Bookshelf 5.0 The CD is available free of charge from [library@searo.who.int](mailto:library@searo.who.int)

### References:

- [1] Shankar PR. CD Review WHO Medicines Bookshelf Version 4.0. Indian J Pharmacol 2005; 37:270.