



A broad view of hospital pharmacy



Arnold G. Vulto

Dear Colleagues,

We are entering the holiday season so take the time to enjoy reading this issue of your journal.

The European Journal of Hospital Pharmacy is now in its 10th volume, and in the third year of the trilingual version. We are preparing a special 10th anniversary issue, in which we will look back at the developments in our association, the congress and the journal. Thanks to one of our major sponsors, Baxter (Solutions for Life, do you see the pun?), we are devising an entertaining competition later this year around our 10th anniversary.

May we announce the call for abstracts for the 10th EAHP congress 2005, to be held in Lisbon from March 16 – 18. The Scientific Committee has made extra room in the congress for (oral) contributions from YOU. Are you involved in research or have you developed an interesting idea or practical tool? Share it with your colleagues and use the congress as your platform. Prepare your abstract now in the holiday season and submit it before October 30. With the support of TEVA Pharmaceuticals Europe we will again produce an attractive program annexe to the journal with all the information you need about next year's congress.

Developments in the therapy of AIDS are fascinating. It is incredible how fast this field has developed, with large spin-offs in areas outside AIDS itself and virology, and it is difficult to stay informed. Within Europe there is wide variation in how involved hospital pharmacists are in supporting HIV-positive patients. Nevertheless we hope this cover story is to your liking, encompassing a topical overview of available drugs, when to use therapeutic drug monitoring and ethical aspects of clinical trials. If this subject interests you, the Lancet July 3, 2004, is almost completely devoted to the HIV / Aids Conference in Bangkok.

As you know, we have 2 sections where we run a series of articles around a certain topic: the cover story and features. From now on we will aim to attract a specialist in the field to advise the editorial board on such a series of papers, at the same time recommending experts who can write the articles.

In this issue, Mr. Christian Hay from the European Article Numbering association (EAN) has done us a great favour by putting together a beautiful technology update on barcoding and other technological features for use in hospital pharmacies. This feature will be continued next issue. If you look back to the first issue this year, you now have up-to-date information on several aspects of automation in hospital pharmacy. For further information, I refer you to an excellent paper in the AJHSP (Practical guide to bar coding for patient medication safety by Neuenschwander et al, April 15, 2003)

The next step is for our partners in industry to adopt the evolving EAN standard. A uniform barcoding system is well established in the food industry. In February 2004, the FDA made it compulsory for all drugs to carry a unique barcode in the USA, see www.fda.gov. They have estimated that this will help prevent nearly 500,000 adverse events and transfusion errors while saving \$95 billion in health costs over 20 years. A similar estimate has not been made for Europe, but however we introduce it, a unique automatically readable identification marker is inevitable if we want to raise the bar further in improving patient safety. In the Netherlands the pharmaceutical industry and drug suppliers have now agreed to put the EAN code on all packages.

And so to the magic world of immunoglobulins. First a critical look at licensed and as yet unlicensed indications: is their use justified. A second paper sheds light on the complicated production process of these proteins.

The country focus this month is on Belgium. The Belgian president Dr. Jean Daniel Hecq tells me that he and his colleagues held a weekend retreat to write this whole country focus. And that it was fun to do so. Well, I hope it will be as much fun for you to learn about hospital pharmacy in Belgium.

All in all, this issue is a nice reflection of the wide scope of our profession as we strive towards the best possible care of the patients who trust us.

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