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## BOOK REVIEW

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WORLD Health Organization (1977) **International Nonproprietary Names (INN) for Pharmaceutical Substances, 1977: Cumulative List No. 5**, Geneva, World Health Organization, (ISB N 92 4 056011 4), 352 pp., Sw. Fr. 48.<sub>n</sub>

In the present day plethora of drugs, medical students and practitioners alike are hard-pressed in their attempt to retain and acquire an adequate knowledge of drugs and their current therapeutic usefulness. It is essential, therefore, that medical school teachers, editors and consultants should facilitate this assimilation of pharmacological knowledge by strictly adhering to the code of using only official names in their reference to drugs. Of all the official names (which include names of national nonproprietary names of many countries published in their respective national pharmacopoeia), it is most logical to use the International Nonproprietary Names (INN) because this set of drug names transcend national boundaries and are internationally accepted. The INN are the equivalent of the botanical names for flowers known by many different common names in different countries.

It is with the above rationale in mind, that this reviewer urges all medical libraries, departmental libraries, clinical units and editors to stock their own copy of the Cumulative List of INN. The relatively high cost of Sw.Fr.48 has precluded it from the possession of the majority of doctors. However, it is perhaps not essential for every doctor to have his own copy so long as he can have ready access to it for reference. Medical school teachers should be aware that they can obtain it at half-price if they order it

through the WHO Programme Coordinator in Kuala Lumpur.

The present Cumulative List is a very much enlarged version, containing all the five official INN — in Latin, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The book also can be a source of reference for national nonproprietary names, molecular formulae of drugs and Chemical Abstracts Service registry numbers. It is indexed for the former two categories. There is also an annex that provides the compact nonproprietary names for radicals and salt forms which may have long and cumbersome chemical names.

The Cumulative List can be used for the following purpose:

- (a) To ascertain the correct INN to use when writing or editing an article or preparing lecture notes.
- (b) To find out the equivalent national nonproprietary name, if any, of a drug for a particular country.
- (c) To find out the identity of a drug in articles published in French, Russian or Spanish. It is presumed here that most readers are conversant only with the English INN.
- (d) To find out the INN of a drug which is only known by its chemical structure. This can be done by looking up the index for molecular formulae.
- (e) To find the accepted nonproprietary name to use for salt and esters which have long chemical names.

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