

RESOURCE BULLETIN

18 FEBRUARY 2008

Summary of this bulletin

This bulletin features recent publications from WHO *World Health Organization* that focus on communication strategies for improving the use of medicines, and re-orienting health care systems:

- *How to improve the use of medicines by consumers*
- *People at the Centre of Health Care: Harmonizing mind and body, people and systems*

How to improve the use of medicines by consumers. A Chetly et al. WHO 2007.

This manual builds on material developed during, and feedback from trainers and participants following, the international Promoting Rational Drug Use in the Community (PRDUC) courses held in Thailand, Uganda and South Africa, and national courses held in India and Nicaragua since 2000. It was produced with funding from the European Community. The manual states that WHO promotes the essential medicines concept and the rational use of medicines. Essential medicines are those that satisfy key health care needs of the population and are safe, affordable, effective, and available in appropriate dosages with sufficient information. It is a national responsibility to decide which medicines suit their context. The essential medicines concept has been a vital element of international and national health policy since the 1980s; for this concept to contribute to better health, countries need to improve rational use of medicines in public and private spheres for both professionals and consumers.

The manual begins by introducing the consumer perspective—outlining consumers' reasons for the way they use or don't use drugs. This is a move away from just considering the how of people's adherence to medicines. It then proposes changing the way medicines are used, to improve their effectiveness and safety, through the process of selecting, testing, implementing and evaluating interventions. It builds on a companion manual that describes the earlier and necessary process of undertaking qualitative, participatory research that leads to the development of effective interventions for improved use of medicines. The chapters in the manual are based around two broad strategic areas: communication; and creating enabling environments. Sections in the manual include: communication methods (eg. face-to-face, drama, effective print materials, and mass media); strategies for developing an enabling environment (eg. advocacy and networking, managerial and regulatory); and planning the process, monitoring and evaluation. In-country examples are provided throughout the publication that place every aspect of the intervention and evaluation process in context.

People at the Centre of Health Care *Harmonizing mind and body, people and systems.* WHO 2007.

Dr Shigeru Omi, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region conceived this publication and declared in 2003 that the time had come to aim for a more holistic approach to health care and "to put the heart back into medical practice". A policy framework for people-centred health care was endorsed by Member States of WHO's South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions, and several publications associated with the initiative (including the one featured here) were presented at a conference in Tokyo, September 2007.

People at the Centre of Health Care accompanies the *Policy Framework*. It describes what people want from health care, characterises people-centred health care and outlines underlying principles. It presents examples of some of the ongoing initiatives across the regions that are attempting to re-orient health care towards people-centredness. The examples (of research as well as personal anecdotes from in-country consultation) illustrate how change is happening within the four policy domains: informed and empowered individuals, families and communities; competent and responsive health practitioners; efficient and benevolent health care organisations; and, supportive and humanitarian health care systems. Background to the WHO initiative, the *Policy Framework* and the *People at the Centre of Health Care* publication can be found on the [People at the Centre of Care Initiative](#) website of the WHO Western Pacific Region.

Click on these links to go directly to the WHO publications:

[How to improve the use of medicines by consumers](#)

[People at the Centre of Health Care: Harmonizing mind and body](#)

Bulletins available on [Health Knowledge Network](#) website.
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