**Drug Information**

A Brief Introduction on Drug Information Agencies in Nepal

Capt. Surya Raj Sharma  
Pharmacist, Shree Birendra Hospital  
Bimal M. Shrestha and Gajendra B. Bhuju -  
Pharmacists, DDA

**Introduction**

Information is the knowledge communicated by others and knowledge obtained from study, investigation, and instruction and communication media. Drug without information is simply a chemical or a substance. Information is must for the proper use of synthesized potent chemical compound known as drug which is used as preventive and curing agent of any diseases. Therefore, although none of the drug is absolutely safe but appropriate information on available drugs would help to use it safely for its maximum benefit. Drug information is one of the most valuable tools of medical professionals, consumers, dispensers, and researchers. Lack of proper unbiased information on drugs may hinder the rational use of drugs which is, in another words, right drug, right dose, right route, right length of time, right price plus other unbiased information on drug.

In developing countries like Nepal, it is not easy to have access to independent information on drugs because of very limited availability of latest scientific literature books, journals and also poor documentation, poor or not hospital pharmacies/drug and therapeutic committees. Unavailability of standard drug treatment schedule, formularies and unethical promotional activities may further aggravate irrational drug use. Therefore, as an initiative to improve information service, National Drug Policy 1995, HMG has taken strategy to effectively develop an efficient Drug Information System to disseminate whatever little information we can make available about proper use of drugs, adverse reaction, contraindication, toxicity, standard and efficacy, poisoning etc. to all concerned through different media including publication of National Drug Formulary, STS, EDL.

A single organization may not have enough expertise, resources, and interest to satisfactorily meet the drug information needs of all various target groups. With all above facts, Drug Information Network of Nepal (DINO) was established on 23rd Sept. 1996 with multisectoral participation consisting of Government Health Institutions, University and NGOs related to health and drugs in the initiative of HMG, Dept. of Health Services and Dept. of Drug Administration with the support of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through Rational Pharmaceutical Management (RPM) project carried out by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and United States Pharmacopoeia (USP) to provide unbiased information on drugs.

**Role of DINO**

There are couple of studies done on drug use at different level of health facilities and private sector indicated that there has been noticeable multi drug prescribing practices, 50.7% of prescripition containing antibiotics and 51.6% essential drug (ED). About 65% of sick population obtains medication from unqualified practitioners. In 1975, World Health Organization (WHO) stated: “The rational use of drugs requires that patients receive medicines appropriate to their clinical needs, in dose that meet their own individual requirements, and at the lowest cost to them and the community”. In summary, this means:- the right drug; the right indication; the correct route; appropriate patient information and appropriate cost.

Similarly, the irrational use to drug is a worldwide problem. In different countries and cultures the drugs given may be different, but the underlying problem of the wrong drug or the wrong patient or the wrong route remains there to emphasize underline importance of drug information. Therefore, the prime goal of establishing DINO could be envisaged as to provide unbiased and accurate drug information. The information provided includes indications, adverse drug reaction, contra-indications, interactions, dosing details, special precautions including drug use in pregnancy and lactation, drug poisoning, availability, storage and cost etc. Pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics and drug regulations are also very important to be considered. It is aimed at providing service to the public at large by the multisectoral participation involved in providing services of different clientele group. (Table 1)
**DINON Members:**

- Department of Drug Administration (DDA): It is the main drug regulatory authority under Ministry of Health.
- Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH): It is a Major Hospital under Tribhuvan University Institute of Medicine.
- Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC): It is a council for regulating and monitoring health research.
- Nepal Chemists and Druggists Association (NCDA): It is a non-governmental organization of drug retailers and wholesalers working at national level.
- Resource center for primary health care (RECPHEC): It is a primary health worker and consumer oriented non-governmental organization.

**Table: 1 Question answering service by the DINoN Member sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service process Site</th>
<th>Department of Drug Administration</th>
<th>Drug Information</th>
<th>Nepal Health Research</th>
<th>Nepal Chemists &amp; Druggists Association</th>
<th>Resource Center For Primary Health Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary audience</td>
<td>Ministry officials, drug manufacturers &amp; traders, health professionals, clinicians paramedics.</td>
<td>Prescribing doctors, pharmacists, nurse, medical students</td>
<td>Health researchers</td>
<td>Chemists, patients care givers</td>
<td>Consumers, journalists community leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary audience</td>
<td>Clinicians, paramedics</td>
<td>Patients, caregivers</td>
<td>Patients, caregivers, community leaders</td>
<td>Medical professionals manufactures, nursing homes</td>
<td>Researchers, primary health workers, NGO's students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided</td>
<td>Mainly regulatory and legal issue; product availability</td>
<td>Drugs facts and therapeutic information</td>
<td>Research and drug related information</td>
<td>Mainly on availability brand names storage, prices, patient counselling</td>
<td>Mainly consumer related drug and health information provision of reference materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modes of inquiry and response</td>
<td>Telephone, letter, person-to-person</td>
<td>Telephone, Fax, E-mail, letter person to person</td>
<td>Telephone, letter person to person</td>
<td>Telephone, Fax, E-mail, letter person to person</td>
<td>Telephone, Fax E-mail, letter person to person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of operation</td>
<td>10 am to 5 PM Sunday to Friday</td>
<td>9 am to 12 PM Sunday to Friday</td>
<td>10 am to 5 PM Sunday to Friday</td>
<td>11 am to 6 PM Sunday to Friday</td>
<td>1 am to 5 PM Sunday to Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Address</td>
<td>Bijuli Bazar, Kathmandu, Nepal</td>
<td>Maharaigunj, Kathmandu, Nepal, P.O. Box 3578</td>
<td>Ramshah Path Kathmandu Nepal, P.O. Box 7626</td>
<td>6/385 Tebahal, Kathmandu, Nepal P.O. Box 1337</td>
<td>Bagbazar, KTM Nepal P.O. Box 117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Number</td>
<td>Phone/Fax 977-1-490227 Email: <a href="mailto:dda@healthnet.org.np">dda@healthnet.org.np</a></td>
<td>Phone: 977-1-416959 Email: <a href="mailto:dlu@healthnet.org.np">dlu@healthnet.org.np</a></td>
<td>Phone: 977-1-254220 Fax 977-1-228069 Email: <a href="mailto:nhro@helathnet.org.np">nhro@helathnet.org.np</a></td>
<td>Phone: 977-1-223548 Email: <a href="mailto:neda@healthnet.org.np">neda@healthnet.org.np</a></td>
<td>Phone/Fax 977-1-225675 Email: <a href="mailto:reephee@healthnet.org.np">reephee@healthnet.org.np</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DINoN member has got access to different information sources: Internet etc. besides reference books, periodicals, journals, formularies, pharmacopoeia etc. and CD ROM (Nepal Drug Information Database) provided by USPDNI under USAID/RPM/USP program.
ACTIVITIES:
The information dissemination activities are routinely conducted by the individual member organizations within their working sphere independently through various publications, notifications and letters. (Table 2)

Table 2: Publications by DINO member sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of the bulletin</th>
<th>Department of Drug Administration</th>
<th>TU Teaching Hospital Drug Information unit</th>
<th>Nepal Health Research Council</th>
<th>Nepal Chemists &amp; Druggists Association</th>
<th>Resources Center For Primary Health Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Drug Bulletin of Nepal</td>
<td>Drug &amp; Therapeutic letter</td>
<td>Upabhokta i.e. Jannai PameTathayahun and various health and drug related information</td>
<td>NCDA Bulletin</td>
<td>Bhalakushari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Every 4 month</td>
<td>Every-2 month</td>
<td>Prescribing Dr. Postgraduate medical students &amp; Pharmacists</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Every-month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target users</td>
<td>Drug Traders, Mfg., pharmacists and health workers</td>
<td>Drug retailers, Wholesalers, and importers</td>
<td>Consumers and grassroots level health workers</td>
<td>Community workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISSEMINATION:
DINO disseminates drug related information especially on drug interaction, adverse drug interaction, misuse and abuse of medicines/drugs, awareness on drug legislation, availability of drug product (generic & brand name), contraindication, drug prescribing, precaution including drug use in pregnancy and lactation and consumers counselling. For dissemination of information, DINO uses modern communication tools like e-mail, telephone, computer, fax and also poster, local papers, reference books, bulletins and newsletters.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS ASKED:
Side effects, availability, regulatory information, contraindication, drug-interaction, and indication. The above figure indicates that the publicity, referrals and pro-active activities of DINO members have influenced the information-seeking behaviour of different target groups.

CONCLUSION:
It is no doubt information providing services are rendered by different organization at their own level to their clients. It is that there should be permanent working committee in order to provide organized and uniform information services. This would enhance exchange of ideas updating available information and uniform dissemination of information. To keep DINO members active routine working committee meeting should be conducted at different member site rotationally. To make the DINO services available extensively organization active in the fields in different regions should be taken into consideration for new membership.

Reference:
2. DINO Brochure, 1996