

## Are the benefits of drugs overshadowed by sensational stories on adverse drug reactions?

The media has recently ran stories on several scandals concerning adverse drug reactions. We have seen articles on adverse reactions to cholesterol medications and combined oral contraceptives. These stories rarely give a balanced account of the benefits of the drugs in question.

For an individual patient a severe adverse drug reaction is, of course, a tragedy. The media often choose to present individuals who have experienced an adverse drug reaction, either personally or as a family member, because such stories have a more attractive human interest angle than statistics, for example.

A drug cannot be marketed unless its benefits outweigh possible adverse reactions at the level of the general population. The task of a drug regulatory authority is to continuously assess the balance between benefits and adverse reactions.

Drug regulatory authorities often foster the safe use of drugs through measures such as improving the monitoring of patients. In rare cases, a drug has to be withdrawn from the market. This happens when the risk of adverse drug reactions is no longer acceptable in comparison to the drug's benefits.

Perhaps we take the benefits of drugs for granted. We spend little time considering how pharmacotherapies have developed. Many aspects of our society and health care have improved at the same time as pharmacotherapies. It is nevertheless interesting to consider what the world would be like without vaccinations, antimicrobial drugs, analgesics, anaesthetics or oral contraceptives, for instance.

The development of pharmacotherapies has improved our quality of life. This issue of Sic! contains stories on pharmacotherapies that have improved over the years. The subjects covered range from the pharmacotherapy of psychoses to pharmaceutical product development – and we have not forgotten about pets.

I wish you all a great summer. Enjoy the Sic! magazine!

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[Go back](#)