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Prescriber's Letter

Review by Vincent J Felitti, MD

Prescriber's Letter is a concise monthly newsletter that provides large amounts of information about drug therapy. Perhaps most importantly, this newsletter presents the information in an interesting and helpful manner that is well matched to the needs of practitioners. Each time I have received a sample copy in the mail, I've ended up reading more than I would have anticipated; the information is presented in an engaging, telegraphic style. In addition to the six-page monthly hard copy of *Prescriber's Letter*, the publication has excellent associated Web-based features, including online access to previous issues.

The drug information in *Prescriber's Letter* is divided into specialties and disease states. Comparisons between related drugs are brief and to the point; drug costs and marketing approaches are mentioned when relevant. Detailed supporting information is referenced by code number at the end of each *Prescriber's Letter* "note" and is easily found on the Web site. The newsletter consistently maintains this pattern of providing interesting, concise, initial information in hard copy along with detailed supporting information on the *Prescriber's Letter* Web site.

For instance, a recent issue included a short note on the generally beneficial use of statin drugs in diabetic patients regardless of their cholesterol level. This segment closed with a reference number link which, when accessed, presents a longer, well documented, comprehensive discussion of the evidence underlying the statements in the newsletter. Another example of the newsletter's useful, easily accessed information is the brief mention given to recent information that St John's wort sometimes blocks the effect of oral contraceptives and allows pregnancy.

The evidence for this claim is well documented on the *Prescriber's Letter* Web site.

This Web site has other helpful, interesting features. Rumor vs Truth explores the validity of current assertions regarding clinical practice; a chatroom function invites reader commentary about these beliefs and enables readers to question the validity of statements overheard. New Drugs lists and discusses drugs recently released into commerce. Recent listings range from the new, nasally administered influenza vaccine to a new drug for Fabry's disease. Useful Charts is another helpful Web site feature in which I immediately found items of interest, for example, a list of drugs to avoid prescribing to patients with dementia; a chart comparing statin drugs; and a surprisingly long list of drugs that interact with grapefruit. Additional Web site functions are included, and CME credit also is available. Subscription to *Prescriber's Letter* includes 24-hour-per-day access to a fax service which provides detailed information that cannot be located on the Web site, www.prescribersletter.com.

An obvious comparison with *Prescriber's Letter* is the *Medical Letter*.¹ Both are high-quality publications. Of the two, however, I found *Prescriber's Letter* far more interesting to read. In addition, the subscription fee is fully refundable at any time. After reviewing four issues of *Prescriber's Letter*, I decided to subscribe to it. ♦

Reference

1. The Medical Letter on Drugs and Therapeutics. New Rochelle (NY): The Medical Letter; 1959- . Bi-weekly. \$63 per year. ISSN 0025-732X. Available from: www.medicalletter.com (accessed September 8, 2003).

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