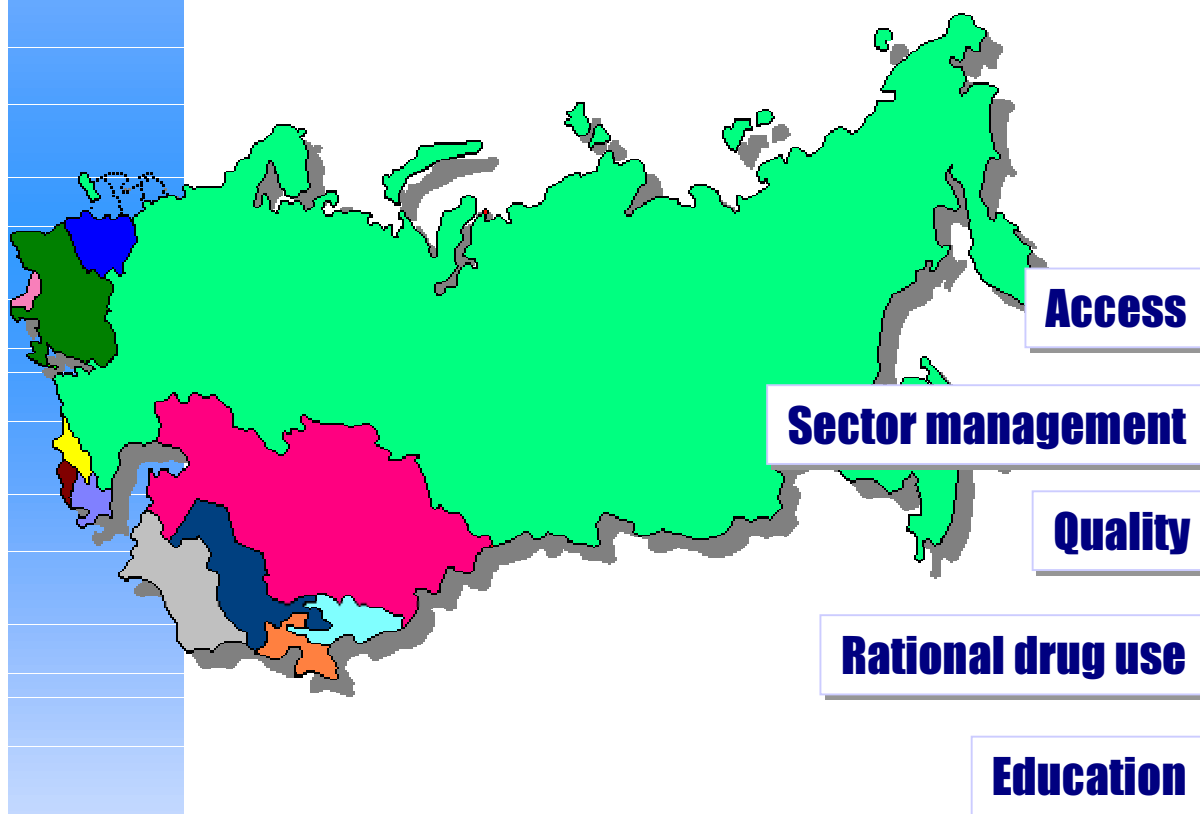


THE PATIENT IN FOCUS

A STRATEGY FOR PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR REFORM IN NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Programme for Pharmaceuticals
Action Programme on Essential Drugs



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in Newly Independent States*



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TARGET 31

QUALITY OF CARE AND APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

By the year 2000, there should be structures and processes in all Member States to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of health care and appropriate development and use of health technologies.

ABSTRACT

The paper describes pharmaceutical sector reform in the newly independent states (NIS) and sets out strategies for its further development. This global strategy will function as a guideline for further reform at country level.

Recent years show many regulatory improvements, but drug treatment also has become more complex, with improved availability and decreased affordability. For the patient the situation is largely dependent on the disposable income. Given the economic hardship of increasingly large groups of the population it is clear that access to quality drugs is no longer within reach of many of them.

The transitional period brings about a serious deterioration of the health status of the population. To reverse this negative trends and to be effective within a changed economic and political environment, pharmaceutical sector reform has to enter a new stage of development. The objective of such continued reform should be to: *ensure affordable access to good quality drugs and their appropriate prescribing and use*. Priorities are: access (affordability of drugs), sector management (policy development, enforcement, information), quality (quality assurance, professional levels), rational drug use (sustainable programmes for drug prescribing and use, the role of the pharmacist), education (basic education, continuous programmes). Access has the highest priority as it affects the patient immediately and has a big political and social impact.

Objectives of pharmaceutical sector reform, i.e. how to improve the situation for the patient, are presented with targets for each priority area. Indications of country needs, possible interventions and involved organizations are given for country implementation. Further support of key persons and organizations is needed to stimulate new approaches for the benefit of all patients.

Keywords

HEALTH CARE REFORM
EDUCATION
ECONOMICS, PHARMACEUTICAL
DRUG UTILIZATION
PHARMACEUTICAL PREPARATIONS – supply and distribution
QUALITY CONTROL
LEGISLATION, DRUG
HEALTH SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY
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Executive summary

The strategy paper “**The Patient in Focus**” describes the pharmaceutical sector reform in the newly independent states (NIS) and sets out strategies for further development. The paper is developed by the World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe, Programme for Pharmaceuticals in collaboration with the WHO Action Programme on Essential Drugs (DAP) in Geneva and with representatives of all the NIS and the Russian Federation. The paper should be seen as a global strategy to function as a guideline for further sector reform at country level. Interpretation of this paper may differ per country, depending on their particular state of development and national implementation capacity.

HEALTH, HEALTH CARE AND PHARMACEUTICALS

The transitional period has brought about a serious deterioration of the health status of the population. Major health indicators show a worsening trend and life expectancy is now almost 15 years less than in western Europe. At the same time countries are in the midst of an unprecedented health care reform. These changes come when less money is available: *do more with less*.

Today, many citizens in NIS are deprived of elementary health care services and access to essential drugs. As pharmaceuticals play an important role in the effectiveness of health care, access to drugs is elementary. Clear strategies to further develop the pharmaceutical sector are necessary to reverse the negative health trends in these countries with a total population of 285 million people.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN NIS

The biggest changes in almost all NIS were the introduction of a market oriented drug distribution system and the diminishing budget allocations for health care. The shortage of funds in the health care system affects appropriate drug treatment directly, as pharmaceuticals are often the first victim to fall out of the budget. For the patient, in addition, limiting access to drugs means limited access to health care.

During this period of change many positive developments in the pharmaceutical sector have taken place, although they were sometimes overshadowed by temporary setbacks and slow economic growth.

Many improvements have been achieved as seen from the regulators point of view. For health professionals drug treatment has become more complex, with improved availability (due to privatization) and decreased affordability. For the patient the situation is largely dependent on his or her disposable income. Given the economic hardship of increasingly large groups of the population it is clear that access to quality drugs is not any longer within reach of many of them.

A NEW TRANSITION PHASE

After the first reform steps have been taken and because of a changed economic and political environment, the pharmaceutical sector is now entering a new stage of development. Economic growth and decentralization give room for new development; health care reform may gradually deliver results; knowledge and local capabilities improve. However, despite the positive economic development in several NIS, it is clear that these countries will remain in a transitional stage for several years, and that the environment for change and innovation will not always be positive and stable.

Health trends in NIS

- Decrease of life expectancy (many will not reach pension)
 - Increased morbidity of circulatory system, infectious and communicable diseases.
 - Emerging epidemia of “poverty” diseases
 - Increased resistance due to irrational drug treatment
 - Low health care budgets
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Major developments in the pharmaceutical sector

- + Legislation is drafted or adopted and regulatory agencies are established.
 - + The quality of drugs in the countries is slowly improving, while privatization has improved availability of drugs.
 - + Training of key persons is delivering first results and there is growing knowledge of financing and cost-containment instruments.
 - + Drug policies are a useful tool in pharmaceutical sector reform, while networking and assistance are contributing to new solutions.
 - Lack of access to drugs due to the low affordability and insufficient budgets in hospitals (large patient payments, deteriorating hospital pharmacy) and for outpatient care.
 - Many people are deprived of essential health care.
 - Problems with the enforcement of new laws and regulations.
 - Universities and continuous education need new methods while there is a lack of reliable independent drug information.
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STRATEGIC VISION AND SETTING PRIORITIES

The objective of continued reform of the pharmaceutical sector should be to:

- *Ensure affordable access to good quality drugs and their appropriate prescribing and use.*

Access has the highest priority: it affects the patient immediately, has a big political and social impact, while improving prescribing practices of doctors. Governments and insurance (funding), health care providers (drug selection and prescribing) and suppliers (offer alternatives) can contribute. Continued improvements in sector management will strengthen recently established structures and create sustainability. National drug policies have a stimulating strategic role.

Quality, not only of the drugs on the market, but of the profession as well, needs further development. Special attention should be paid to enforcement of regulations. Rational selection and prescribing of drugs is critical in NIS because of inherited prescribing practices (free health care and drugs) and the current lack of money. A comprehensive approach, including initiatives at regional and hospital level, is needed to achieve tangible results. Fundamental changes in the educational system should make health professionals more patient focused and health outcome oriented, with special emphasis on drug selection and prescribing.

Priorities for pharmaceutical sector reform in NIS

1. **Access.**
Improve the affordability of drugs, especially for hospital patients
 2. **Sector management.**
Policy development, implementation and enforcement; improve information and communication
 3. **Quality.**
From quality control to quality assurance (including GMP), enhance professional levels
 4. **Rational drug use.**
Sustainable programs for rational prescribing and use of drugs; involve the pharmacist
 5. **Education.**
Reform basic education, targeted continuous post-graduate programs.
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OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Patient in Focus. Objectives of pharmaceutical sector reform are to improve the situation for the patient. These patient oriented objectives are presented lead to targets for each priority area. In addition: indications are given of country needs, possible interventions and involved organizations. These can be used for country implementation plans.

Collaboration, networking and support of key persons and organizations is needed to share knowledge and stimulate new approaches for the benefit of all patients.

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