

## Written information about medicines improves consumers' knowledge

<b>Clinical question</b>	How effective is written medical information (WMI) about individual medicines on relevant patient outcomes (knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and health outcomes)?
<b>Bottom line</b>	There is some evidence that WMI can improve knowledge. There were no trials that evaluated the effects of internet-based medicines information, or the effects of WMI on health outcomes. Overall, there was no strong evidence that providing WMI on its own will improve adherence to medicine instructions. None of the studies showed that written information was harmful.
<b>Caveat</b>	The studies were generally of a poor quality. The trials presented the written information for patients in different ways, and most did not design the leaflets in a way that made them easy to read. In many cases, trials were not clearly reported, so it is not known if they were carried out correctly. Finally, due to the heterogeneity of the trials, it was not possible to carry out a meta-analysis.
<b>Context</b>	Medicines are the most common intervention in most health services. People taking medicines need good quality information: to enable them to take and use the medicines effectively, to understand the potential harms and benefits, and to allow them to make an informed decision about taking them. Written medical information, such as a leaflet or provided via the internet, is an intervention that may meet these purposes.
<b>Cochrane Systematic Review</b>	Nicolson D et al. Written information about individual medicines for consumers. Cochrane Reviews 2009. Issue 2. Article No. CD002104. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD002104.pub3. This review contains 25 studies involving 4788 participants
PEARLS No. 194, September 2009, written by Brian R McAvoy	

[References]

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners. They are funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group.

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases.

View PEARLS online at:

- [www.cochranepriarycare.org](http://www.cochranepriarycare.org)