

irrational drugs by various drug companies. Since majority of doctors in rural areas are not qualified, rural population is the worst affected. The author further points out that irrational prescription is not confined to non-allopaths alone. Even the prescribing patterns of the qualified allopathic doctors are far from satisfactory. His studies indicate that even in a metropolitan city like Mumbai, 100 practitioners had prescribed 80 different regimens for a common disease like tuberculosis, out of which only four matched with the standard regimens recommended by the WHO! The author therefore recommends that the services of community health workers be used for simple ailments at least; since on the basis of surveys conducted, it has been established that they generally do not indulge in irrational drug use.

The second half of the book covers detailed report of the research study on 'Supply and use of pharmaceuticals in Satara District', which comprises a set of seven interconnected small sub-studies. In this study, an attempt has been made to analyse and compare, the doctors' prescription with the standard prescription for the diseases, for which these prescriptions were given. As a result of this exercise, an estimate of the financial wastage due to irrational prescription in this district could be computed. In addition, the drug needs of this district could be estimated and compared with the current expenditure on drugs.

Although the study, conducted in Satara district for three years, is unique in several respects, as claimed by the author, the detailed methodology and results presented with statistical significance may distract and divert the attention of readers from the main theme of the book. The author assumes that if technical language is avoided, detailed presentation would be of interest to a wider audience. But his attempts to avoid scientific and technical details are not quite successful. Although the methodological issues could be of interest to investigators of drug epidemiology studies, such details may not interest the general readers. However, the results of the study, which reflect the

use of the drugs at the grass root level by various agencies, both in public and private sector, are indeed of considerable importance for better utilization of drugs in India.

The author has not only extensively dwelt on the reasons for irrational drug use in India, but has also suggested remedial measures to develop a rational drug policy, that includes ban on irrational drugs, preparation of essential drug list, continuing medical education, etc. Valuable data, collected by the author from different sources, are presented in several tables and figures. Guidelines for prescription analysis, provided in appendices, would be useful to investigators in this field.

In a nutshell, Anant Phadke, in this book presents the true picture of current production pattern and use of irrational drugs, as well as projects the steps that need to be taken to develop a rational drug policy in India. Besides, a brief account has also been included of the measures taken by the various agencies to influence the policy-makers to adopt a rational drug policy. In general, the book would be of use to policy-makers, physicians, pharmacists, public, voluntary agencies, etc. who are interested in better utilization of drugs in India without wasteful expenditure by the government as well as by the public.

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Development and the Information Age.
John Howkins and Robert Valantin (eds).
International Development Research
Centre, Ottawa, Canada. 1998. ISBN:
0-88936-835-X, pp. xiii + 59.

What are the implications of the information revolution? Will it help bridge the gap between the developed and the developing countries, or will it, like the industrial revolution, exacerbate the divide

between the two? Several publicly funded agencies around the world are interested in understanding how information and communication technologies can be harnessed in development programmes. The Institute of New Technologies of the United Nations University, for example, have convened a few conferences and commissioned a few studies on this issue. The United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, for its part, decided to undertake a scenario-building exercise and IDRC pitched in some funds. A fabulous venue, Kelburn Castle in Scotland, was chosen, two facilitators, acknowledged experts in scenario building, a technique pioneered by Royal Dutch Shell, were hired, and an international team of about 25 participants including six invited speakers was assembled for a five-day workshop. This cute little volume describes the background to the workshop and presents the four scenarios that resulted.

Based on two axes, viz. global environment (inclusive vs exclusive, open vs closed, and enabling vs restrictive) and national response (complete vs partial, proactive vs reactive, and engaged vs disengaged), the participants came up with four scenarios, which were designated 'the march of follies', 'cargo cult', 'net-blocs' and 'network'. Using these scenarios and a shared understanding of the five key indicators of development, viz. literacy, education and skill building; health; income and economic welfare; choice, democracy, and participation; and technology, the group arrived at some conclusions that should be of interest to policymakers and students of development.

I wonder if the purpose could not have been achieved at a much lower cost than by the typically expensive ways of some of our international organizations.

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