

Press Release on the 40th AGM of the PDR (Date of Release)

The Pharma Documentation Ring (PDR) held its 40th Annual General Meeting in Montpellier, France from the 30th September to the 2nd October. The PDR is an association whose members represent the information departments of the leading R&D-based pharmaceutical corporations. The 25 Companies, who were all represented at the meeting, account for more than half of the total global turnover (\$xxx billion) of ethical drugs in 1997. This year's successful meeting, excellently organized by Sanofi Recherche, was attended by 42 delegates from the member companies, with Eli Lilly attending for the first time. In addition, 10 former members, including x past presidents attended the 40th anniversary celebrations.

To mark the 40th Anniversary and the approaching millennium, three invited speakers gave their vision of different aspects of the information scene in the 21st century. The speakers, Ian Tarr, Current Drugs, JR Prous, Jnr (Prous Associates) and Sandra Ward, Glaxo Wellcome, discussed new technologies, together with the challenges and opportunities for both publishers and Pharmaceutical Company information groups. The rapid pace of change and the need to adapt quickly to the new environments affecting both the information providers and the consumers was a common theme in these presentations.

The remainder of the meeting was concerned with the sharing of knowledge and experience of different aspects of information acquisition and supply amongst the PDR Company representatives. Selected highlights from the presentations and ensuing discussions were:

- all PDR companies have well established intranet based information services and the focus now is in optimising the benefits from this important technology
- extranets are increasingly being used as a way of obtaining secure access to large volumes of external information
- PDR companies are continuing to migrate their CD-ROM applications to an intranet environment, to overcome the known problems associated with networking CD-ROMs
- high year on year price increases for some paper based journals continues to challenge PDR Company budgets and a perceived need to exploit the electronic medium will inevitably lead to the cancellation of some paper based subscriptions
- there has been considerable growth in the number of scientific, technical and medical journals available in electronic form. Most PDR Companies have already provided their R&D staff with access to some electronic journals. Further growth in this area is anticipated.

- the PDR will establish a joint PDR/Publisher Forum with a small and selected group of publishers to develop a model licensing agreement for electronic journals. This follows a successful spring meeting in Bracknell on electronic journals attended by PDR Representatives, publishers, subscription agents and other interested parties.
- the timeliness of pharmaceutical patent information from the main database producers - Chemical Abstracts Service and Derwent Publications Ltd has continued to improve. A detailed comparison of the coverage of the two leading patent current awareness products - Patents Fast Alert and Patent Previews revealed interesting results on the degree of overlap of these two products
- CrossfireplusReactions (Beilstein Informationssystemes), which is being used in-house by nearly all the PDR Companies, continues to be a rich source of chemical information. Use of SCIFINDER (CAS) by PDR companies is growing rapidly and this product is generally being viewed as complementary to Crossfire.
- markedly increased interest by companies in the areas of competitive intelligence and knowledge management, together with the realisation that levels of information literacy needed to be raised within PDR Companies
- developments in proposed EU Copyright legislation and the introduction of further national licensing schemes continued to cause concern to some delegates
- Continuing uncertainty over the long term support of in-house TRIP database applications has led several companies to actively pursue development programmes to replace this database
- The 1998 survey on licensed-in Drug Development Product Files within the 25 PDR member companies indicated that the Pharmaprojects file (PJB) is still the most popular source. Over the last 12 months, however, there has been considerable growth in the use of the IDDb (Current Drugs) by PDR Companies. A detailed analysis of the accuracy of the development status information in Drug Development Product Files produced disappointing results.

* The 41st PDR AGM, to be held on 30th Sept. - 2nd October 1998 in Bagsvard, Denmark, will be hosted by Novo Nordisk.

The PDR survey conducted amongst members at the recent Montpellier meeting indicated a very high level of relevant and quality presentations by delegates. An individualistic approach to the different topics was strongly evident, helping to make these AGMs one of the annual highlights of the information scene in the pharmaceutical sector. A report on last year's PDR AGM can be found in the journal -Drug News and Perspectives, 11 (1) 58 - 63 (1998).

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