



DECLARATION of CARTAGENA DE INDIAS 2009

Participants to the 3rd WSMI/ILAR/ANDI Latin American Conference declare that:

1. Given the heavy burden imposed by chronic diseases on healthcare systems and considering that these chronic diseases are determined for a larger part by lifestyles which can be modified by the individuals themselves, it is vital to promote the wider practice of self-care. Promoting self-care has the potential to encourage people to adopt proactive healthy behaviours and to generate substantial savings, while refocusing health systems towards the prevention of disease.
2. With the view to achieving the above mentioned objectives, we require that self-care become a core component of public health policies, that it be recognized as a fundamental right of the individuals and that individuals themselves as well as the health professionals be appropriately informed and encouraged.
3. Responsible self-medication encompasses the prevention of certain diseases and the treatment of symptoms and minor ailments which can easily be recognized by the public, with safe and effective medicines. Worldwide, the trend is towards the inclusion of a wider range of health problems within the scope of self-medication, such as conditions which, until recently, were considered as “prescription-only” indications.



4. Responsible self-medication, as one element of self-care, requires the active participation of patients, the pharmaceutical industry, government authorities, academia, doctors, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals. Furthermore, it is important that the latter three actors recognize the value of self-medication and support its development through evidence-based publishing.
5. The practice of self-medication implies that people are able to take care of themselves and it should be encouraged given both the public health and the economic benefits it has the potential to generate. It also implies that patients are supported with appropriate information and education.
6. By virtue of the fact that in the majority of the countries in the region the concept of self-medication is mistakenly taken for self-prescription, enforcing the selling requirements of prescription medicines should become a priority.
7. The advertising and promotion of medicines must be truthful and the information conveyed on the mode of action, expected benefits, level of relief or cure for a given medicine must be consistent with the scientific/technical data which was submitted at the time of registration or when registering for a new mode of action or benefit for the patient.
8. The gap which exists between Latin America and other more developed regions in the number of ingredients authorized for sale without a prescription represent an opportunity for the authorities of the former group of countries to review those ingredients whose characteristics comply with nonprescription requirements.

9. The demographic changes, the pressure on health systems and the growing interest of consumers in playing a more active role in their healthcare altogether constitute a strong basis for initiating a reclassification process which would impact positively on public health and would discourage the practice of self-prescription while at the same time eliminate the related risks.
10. Regulatory authorities and industry must work together to develop clear and transparent reclassification procedures, without imposing an unnecessary regulatory burden, and taking into account the experience of those countries who have a leading role in the development of self-care and responsible self-medication.