

In Central America, a competitive brand marketed by McKesson is recommended for whooping cough.

In the United States, the Parke-Davis product carries a long list of contraindications, warnings, and adverse reactions. Perhaps the most alarming of these include aplastic anemia and other serious or fatal diseases of the blood-forming system.

In Mexico, the Parke-Davis product carries only a limited list of warnings. In Central America, no contraindications or warnings are given, and no adverse reactions are disclosed.

The McKesson product statement discloses a few hazards in Central America but none in Colombia and Ecuador.

What are the consequences of this type of promotion? What are the possible hazards? First, physicians and pharmacists will be more likely to prescribe and dispense chloramphenicol either when it is not needed, when it is contraindicated, or when other drugs would be more appropriate. Patients will be more likely to take chloramphenicol without particular concern for the possible hazards, or they may be totally unaware of the hazards and some will undoubtedly suffer serious, indeed fatal, side effects. Dr. Silverman has already noted that Mexico has an unusually high rate of fatal aplastic anemia, related, at least in part, to the widespread, irrational use of chloramphenicol. This is reason enough to markedly restrict the promotion, prescribing and dispensing of chloramphenicol in those countries in which it is used.