

in part, the quality, cost and effectiveness of any drug insurance program, governmental or nongovernmental. And on it will depend the economic well-being of a drug company.

Rational Prescribing

The appropriate selection of a drug--the right drug for the right patient, in the right amounts at the right times--is generally defined as rational prescribing, and any significant deviation is considered to be irrational prescribing.

Rational prescribing is obviously the result of judgments on many points--the safety and efficacy of the drug for the clinical problem at hand, the advantages or disadvantages of alternative forms of therapy, the most appropriate dosage form, the length and intensity of treatment, the possible side-effects or adverse reactions, and the possibility of drug interaction.

To these may be added judgments concerning relative costs.

Rational prescribing is clearly a major goal for the welfare of patients. It is likewise a major goal for any drug insurance program. Here, emphasis has been placed not directly on achieving rational prescribing but rather