Drug Information for Patients, 2002 was developed for use in patient-education programs conducted by health care professionals. There are over 200 monographs discussing relevant information on single and non-single entity prescription and nonprescription products that are organized alphabetically by generic name. The index includes both generic and brand name medications. Brand names from other countries are also available for many of the medications in a separate appendix, sorted by generic name, but are not cross-referenced by international brand name.

The monographs are presented in an understandable and legible format that is readily comprehensible to consumers and unbiased in content and tone. Each monograph includes information on why the medication is prescribed. Sometimes information is available on the pharmacological class or mechanism of action, but not consistently. Information on adverse effects, including drug interactions is available, but it is brief. Frequently, there is information on whether the reaction is common, but very little guidance is provided on what action to take. Although this is understandable under many circumstances, in other cases, information is lacking. For instance, some adverse effects may be mild and transient. The patient may find this information helpful and comforting. The monographs frequently have a clear warning statement displayed at the beginning of the document when important information needs to be shared with consumers. There is also a nice section on drug-food interactions. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations supports efforts to counsel patients in this area. This information is an important element of the monograph. Other information in the monographs includes missing dose information, contraindications, precautions, statement of risk and proper use, and storage. Limited information is available regarding use in special populations such as women who are breast-feeding, pediatric patients, diabetic patients, or special considerations in the elderly. There is no discussion of the process that is used to determine what information is included in the monographs. Although the information is sufficiently comprehensive, with the vast amount of information provided on each of these medications, it would be helpful to elicit input from a variety of health care practitioners working in different areas of practice to help ensure that only the most important and practical information is included. These drug monographs can be duplicated and distributed to individual patients as needed.

The monographs are also available in a software package, MedTeach, that has advantages over the print copy. Monographs can be modified and presented with customized headings, listing patients and physician names, pharmacy names, location and telephone numbers, and dosing schedule. Unlike the text copy, which is updated annually, the MedTeach software is updated on a quarterly basis and includes new medications and revised monograph information.

Drug Information for Patients 2002 is an excellent resource for patients seeking information on medications that is unbiased in content and tone. The monographs are well-written, accurate, and sufficiently comprehensive, although the integration of a peer-review process would be helpful. The electronic format has several advantages including personalization of information for the patient and easy distribution.

Corresponding Author: Mary Lea Gora-Harper, PharmD. College of Pharmacy, University of Kentucky, Rose Street Pharmacy Bldg, Lexington, KY 40536-0082. Tel: 859-257-8403. Fax: 859-323-2049. E-mail: mharp1@pop.uky.edu