



MEDICAL THERAPIES AND PHARMACOLOGY

THE EXISTING WHO LIST OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES FOR DERMATOLOGY AND ITS LIMITATIONS

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The Essential medicine list revised and published every 2 years provides a simple list of treatments that are deemed essential for the care of patients. It strikes a balance between the practical and the affordable, but is based on clinical and scientific evidence. The dermatological list was originally designed to focus on medicines which are available on day to day basis in resource poor settings although with time however the tensions between evidence of effectiveness, which is often lacking for older medicines, and cost has been brought to the fore. The current list includes specific treatments that range from anti-inflammatory drugs such as hydrocortisone and representatives of potent steroids to topical antifungals and antibacterial. There are sections of antiseptics and topical preparations including those based on coal tar. Other medicines used in dermatology such as antibiotics are grouped in different sections of the list. We are in the process of reviewing the list to include a wider range of medicine used in the skin such as calcitriol as well as anti-inflammatory drugs such as methotrexate whose dermatological indications have not been approved, as yet, by WHO. Within the list there are also compounds that are no longer used and others that should be added. Other issues that have been discussed are the problems of generic medications with variable clinical efficacy and the best means of limiting misuse of antibiotics.

