

*A report on the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the  
Pharma Documentation Ring.*

# PDR AGM Focuses on the Internet

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by Alexander Mullen

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THE AIMS, SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES of the Pharma Documentation Ring (PDR) were already described in a past issue of this journal.<sup>1</sup> In essence, the PDR represents the interests of the scientific information departments of its member organizations, all of which are R&D-based pharmaceutical companies or major chemical companies with strong pharmaceutical activities. All corporate members—some 27—were represented at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), a total of 44 delegates being present. The meeting was superbly hosted and well organized by Dr. Erik Helmer of Pharmacia and took place in Helsingborg, Sweden, October 4–6, 1995. Apart from a few invited guest speakers (e.g., information providers), PDR meetings are normally only open to members of the organization or their affiliated companies.

## President's report

Over the last 12 months, the PDR has experienced a consolidation within its ranks, which is still ongoing. The

status of membership at the beginning of October 1995 is shown in Figure 1.

Taking recent and current mergers/takeovers involving existing PDR companies into account, the corporate groups represented by members now account for some 65% of the worldwide ethical drug turnover (\$163 billion in 1993–94) of the top pharmaceutical multinationals.

The focal points of external activities of the PDR over the previous 12 months mainly concerned active participation in meetings involving pan-European projects and major international information service providers important to pharmaceutical R&D.

## Highlights of the AGM

The company reports session accounted for almost one third of the meeting, individual reports tending to concentrate on:

- Effect of mergers/reorganizations on the working environment;
- Usage of and security aspects associated with the Internet; and
- Growth in acceptance of commercial files on various media within com-

panies and associated training/user education issues.

In separate sessions, other important topics were dealt with at length, some of which are listed below:

- Biomedical literature;
- Biotechnology;
- CD-ROM databases;
- Chemical literature;
- Company drug papers;
- Copyright and document delivery;
- Document management and archiving;
- Drug information systems on development products;
- Information management;
- Library affairs/ADONIS;
- Patents; and
- Reaction systems.

Excellent state-of-the art reviews, partially based on PDR surveys, were given by the relevant coordinators, enabling delegates to be updated on a wide range of subjects from a critical end-user perspective—within a relatively short space of time.

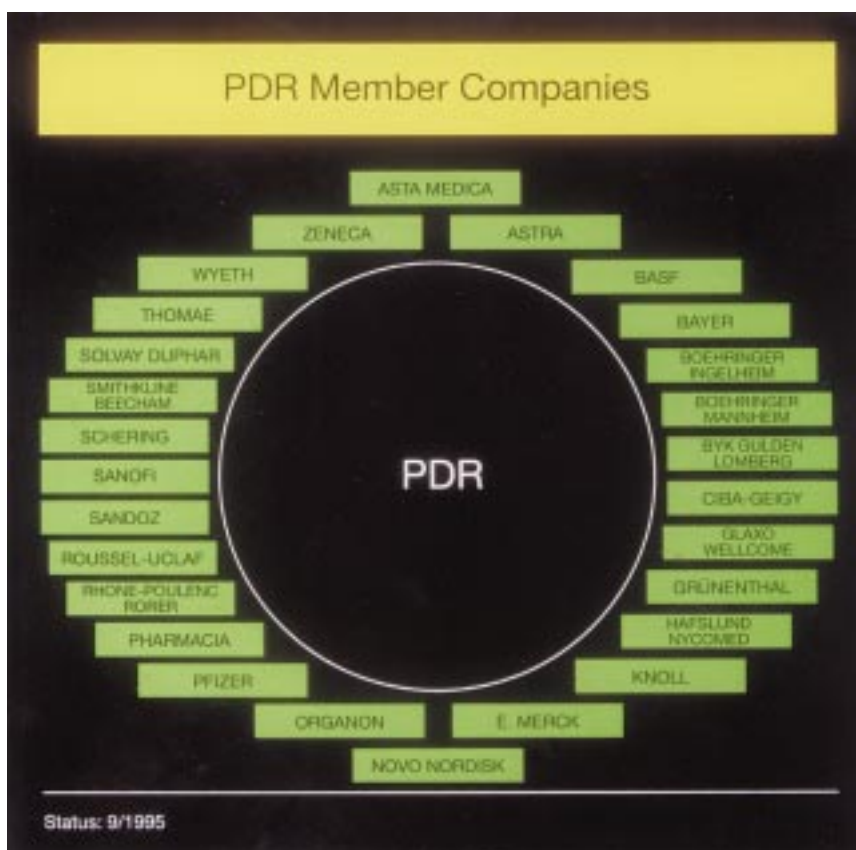


Fig. 1. "Ring" of PDR companies.

### Core topic: Internet

Each AGM focuses on a major "hot" topic of relevance to PDR members. In this very well organized core session, "Internet—A Pragmatic Approach," organized by Dr. E. Mernke of Boehringer Mannheim, fascinating insight was provided into major resources of relevance to the R&D-based pharmaceutical industry. The different approaches/policies used to facilitate end-user access to the "information highway" by member companies formed the main thrust of this session. In addition, the spread of internal WWW/HTML (World Wide Web/Hypertext Markup Language) technology for applications (e.g., front-ends to internal text files, etc.) within companies is rapidly gaining a foothold—the so-called "Intranet." A key development will be the implementation of user-friendly WWW browsers (e.g., Netscape) as client front-ends to internal servers. This trend will undoubtedly continue to gain acceptance within the pharmaceutical industry.

### Drug information systems on development products

To give an example of a presentation made on one of the PDR topics previously mentioned, part of the report on "Drug Information Systems on Development Products" will be briefly outlined here.

Figure 2 presents a brief overview of the commercial files currently being used in-house by PDR companies. These files, which stem from eight different producers, are all substance- or development product-based (i.e., a record in the database generally corresponds to a compound).

As Derwent's SDF was one of the first files of its genre, it is not surprising to find it present in some 22 of the 27 PDR companies that participated in the survey in May 1995, even though this ranking probably does not reflect its relative level of usage within member companies. Thereafter follow R&D Focus (IMS) with 19 and

Pharmaprojects (PJB Publications) with 13 installations. Together with the Pharmastructures file (PJB Publications), these four files account for almost two thirds of the area of the above chart.

Some 15 files are present in one or more PDR companies. Except for MDDR (MDL Information Systems' Drug Data Report) and IMS's Drug Launches, the remaining files are present in a maximum of five companies.

The trend in the use of these files by PDR companies over the last few years was also discussed during this session. The degree of overlap between the different files was analyzed at the meeting, some of the results also being presented at the *International Chemical Information Conference* held in Nîmes, France, in October 1995.

One example of an analysis of the coverage of the different files is presented below.

### Comparison of coverage of NME EXPRESS with four other selected commercial files

The obvious question crops up when looking at the spectrum of databases available—do we really need them all, is there not a high degree of overlap?

At the beginning of 1995, the overlap of a monthly update of Proust Science's NME EXPRESS database (with some 64 compounds from November 1994) was compared with that of four other files shown in the previous figure (Fig. 2). Almost 25% (19) of the "new molecular entities"—all with test compound numbers—reported in NME EXPRESS were not to be found in the corresponding version of Conference Fast Track, Pharmaprojects, R&D Focus or the SDF.

The sources used by Proust Science for NME EXPRESS are reported to be the latest journal literature, scientific congresses, company press releases, etc.

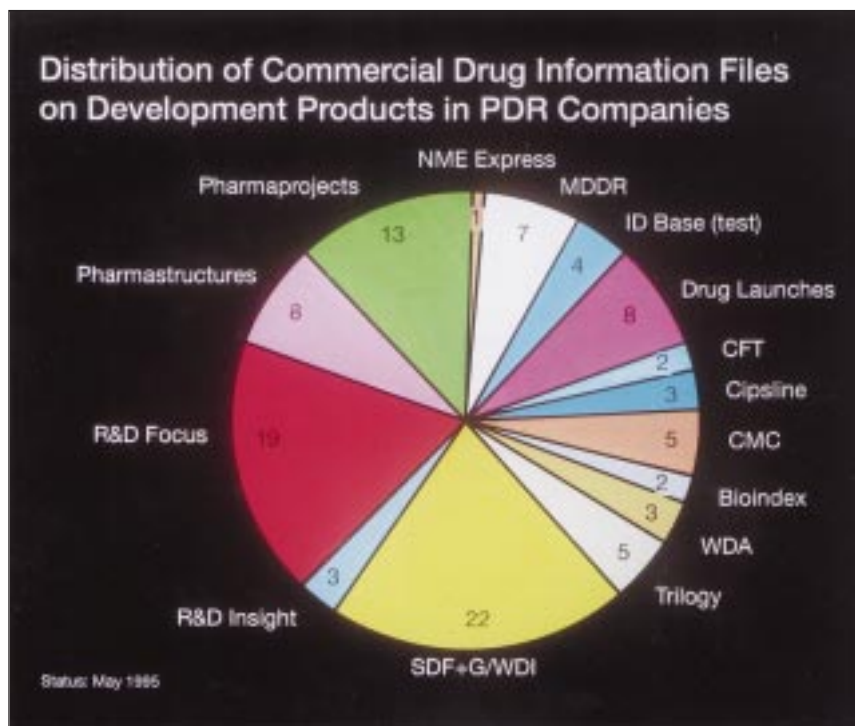


Fig. 2. Distribution of commercial in-house files on development products in PDR companies.

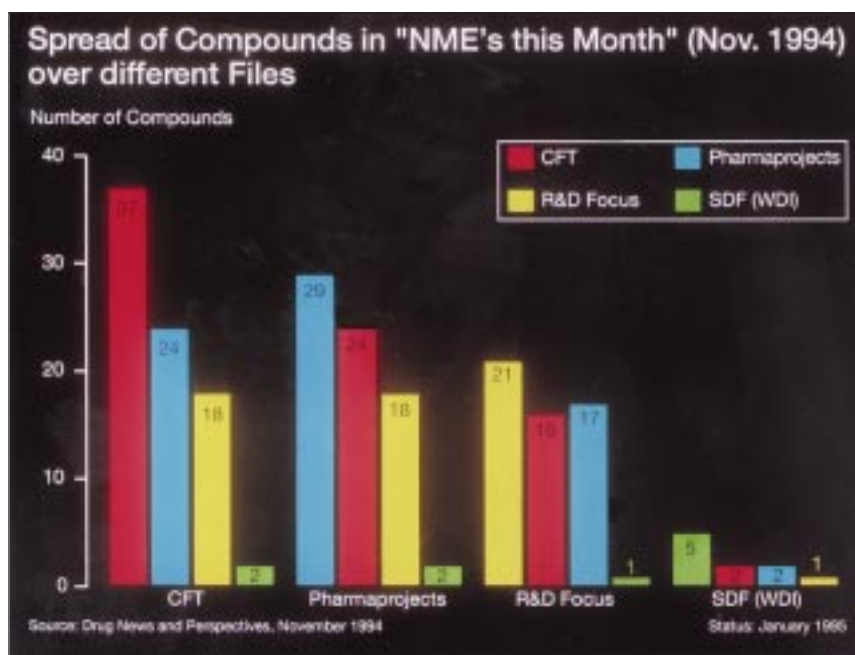


Fig. 3. Coverage of test compounds in NME EXPRESS compared to four other commercial files.

The spread of the coverage of the different files relative to this NME EXPRESS (November 1994) release can be appreciated in Figure 3.

Conference Fast Track covered 37 of the mentioned 64 test compounds,

followed by Pharmaprojects with 29, R&D Focus with 21 and the SDF with five (in part due to its four- to six-month updating frequency). Of the 37 compounds found by Conference Fast Track, 24 were also in Pharmaprojects and 18 in R&D Focus and so on.

This analysis stresses the complexity of trying to track the development of test compounds comprehensively—the information sources are varied and, so far, all have something unique to offer!

### PDR board election and internal affairs

As the PDR Executive Board is only elected for a two-year period, a new ballot was held at the AGM. Members of the PDR board for 1996–97 are: President, A. Mullen, Bayer AG; Vice Presidents, Y. Dubosc, Rhône-Poulenc Rorer and I. Sinclair, Pfizer; Secretary, C. Otto, Boehringer Ingelheim.

The following PDR companies have kindly agreed to host future Annual General Meetings:

- 1996—Glaxo Wellcome (U.K.)
- 1997—Schering AG (Germany)
- 1998—Sanofi (France)
- 1999—Novo Nordisk (Sweden)
- 2000—Zeneca Pharmaceuticals (U.K.)

The 1995 PDR AGM maintained the momentum and the high standard of presentations customary over the last few years. This annual event is almost unrivalled in the density and critical evaluation (from an end-user perspective) of specific topics and developments in information technology and its application to the pharmaceutical sector. Over the last year, the PDR has fortified its position as a “forum” for major information providers to get first-hand input on the real needs of their actual or potential customers within the pharmaceutical R&D sector.

In the coming year we look forward to continuing to work with service providers in a constructive manner.

### References

1. Dubosc, Y. and Mullen, A. *Overview of the activities of the PDR*. Drug News Perspect 1994, 7: 551–6.

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