Editorial

Antiviral Chemistry & Chemotherapy’s current antiviral agents FactFile (2nd edition)

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The concept of antiviral FactFiles dates from May 1994 with the publication in the (now discontinued) International AntiViral News of a table of mutations in HIV reverse transcriptase and protease associated with antiviral drug resistance, which was compiled by Raymond Schinazi and colleagues [1]. This was followed in May of the following year by the first Current Antiviral Agents FactFile [2,3]. This was also published in International AntiViral News in two parts: the first dealing with herpesviruses, hepatitis viruses and respiratory viruses, and the second dealing with HIV. The original versions were compiled by Drs Siân Goldthorpe, Derek Kinchington and Ms Lisa Lovelidge.

The idea was conceived for essentially selfish reasons – my desire for a convenient aide memoire to the current antiviral agents to take to meetings or to keep to hand when writing on the subject of antiviral chemotherapy. Thus, the first edition aimed to ‘provide a concise source of reference covering the principal antiviral agents’. It was intended that the list was to be restricted to those compounds that had at least potential for therapeutic use. It was always the intention, however, to include a few compounds that, although they were no longer used in the clinic, perhaps because of unacceptable toxicity, remained important in the history of the development of the field. The original FactFile documented a total of just 51 compounds.

In this latest update of the FactFile (the second to be published in Antiviral Chemistry and Chemotherapy; the first was published in 2006 [4]) the content of has been thoroughly reviewed and updated. The total number of compounds has grown to a startling 108 with HIV alone accounting for 69 of the entries. On reflection, this is an extraordinary number; unimaginable at the time of the first publication in 1995 when there was still scepticism about antiviral therapy and a widely held belief that it could never rival vaccination for the control of virus disease. At present, various hepatitis viruses represent a burgeoning field of novel inhibitors and this probably represents the fastest growing area of development. We have tried several different ways of dividing the antiviral targets in order to obtain the most logical presentation. The current edition is divided into three parts: DNA viruses, RNA viruses, and retroviruses and hepadnaviruses. The latter have been combined because of the similarity between the critical replication enzymes (the reverse transcriptase activity, which is common to both kinds of virus) and the fact that several compounds are active against both targets.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution to this edition of the Current Antiviral Agents FactFile from my friend and colleague Professor Erik De Clercq, who acted as co-editor. His personal knowledge of the breadth of the field of antiviral research and his meticulous eye for accuracy in both textual matters and chemical structures has been absolutely essential to the project, and in large measure the content of the current edition has resulted from his very hard work. We are both indebted to many further contributions from our friends worldwide that have helped to make the present version as complete and up-to-date as possible.

There is an argument that the internet has made this whole enterprise obsolete! However, we believe that this is not so and that there is still a place for a well-written, carefully reviewed compendium of information on a discrete field and we hope you agree. As we go to press, there is no doubt that some of the information is already out of date; therefore, we really welcome comments, corrections and suggestions for the deletion of entries or inclusion of compounds that have may have been overlooked. If you have any suggestions, please contact either of the authors or the editorial office at International Medical Press. There is a response sheet in the journal to facilitate this.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no competing interests.
References


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