Information for timely and informed decision making is critical for managing pharmaceutical systems successfully. Staff members at every level and position use information to make decisions that affect how a pharmaceutical supply system functions. Effective pharmaceutical management requires monitoring the information related to patient adherence, drug resistance, availability of medicines and laboratory supplies, patient safety, product registration and quality, and financing and program management, among other issues.

An effective pharmaceutical management information system (PMIS) can synthesize the large volume of data generated by pharmaceutical management operations. It then processes the data into information for use in planning activities, estimating demand, allocating resources, and monitoring and evaluating pharmaceutical management operations. This information can be in the form of a few key indicators that allow staff at all levels to monitor both their own performance and that of the units for which they are responsible. A good PMIS also alerts staff to problems and triggers critical actions. Another important function is to improve health system accountability. Much of the recording and reporting in a PMIS is intended to create an audit trail for products as they enter or leave a pharmaceutical supply system.

MSH promotes a comprehensive approach to ensure that the PMIS captures information on both product and patient-focused parameters. We work with countries to assess the existing PMIS and its subset, the logistics management information system, to analyze gaps and develop an overall system that meets stakeholder needs, including harmonizing and coordinating donor activities and reporting. We integrate manual and electronic tools into a comprehensive strategy to strengthen pharmaceutical systems. We help empower system users through procedures and training to perform appropriate data analysis, understand key trends within their own units, and use the information for local decision making. Our goal is to create sustainable, country-owned information systems that mesh with the overall health management information system.

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