ECHO

Medical supplies and equipment for primary health care
A practical resource for procurement and management

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Drugs, medical supplies and equipment have a significant impact on the quality of patient care and account for a high proportion of health care costs. Health services need to make informed choices about what to buy in order to meet priority health needs and avoid wasting limited resources.

Many organisations have produced useful information about essential drugs, but less information is available about essential medical supplies and equipment. Despite the fact that there is a much wider range of different brands and items to choose from, selecting supplies and equipment is often given little attention. This often results in procurement of items that are inappropriate because they are technically unsuitable, incompatible with existing equipment, spare parts and consumables are not available, or because staff have not been trained to use them.

Procurement is only one part of managing medical supplies and equipment, and effective storage, stock control, care and maintenance are also critical if health services are to get the most out of what they buy. However, there is also limited information available about these aspects of management of medical supplies and equipment.

To address this situation, ECHO has produced *Medical supplies and equipment for primary health care*. The manual is intended to be a practical resource for those responsible for procurement and management of medical supplies and equipment at primary health care level. It includes guiding principles for selecting supplies and equipment, provides guidelines for procurement, storage and stock control, care and maintenance, and considers safe disposal of medical waste. The manual also discusses the use of standard lists as a tool for encouraging good procurement practice and includes model lists of medical supplies and equipment required for primary health care activities in health facilities and in the community, and for basic laboratory facilities.

Although Medical supplies and equipment for primary health care is mainly intended for primary health care level, it will also be a useful resource for those at national and district levels responsible for health planning and management, training, and managing medical stores.