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International Journal of Pharmaceutics 123 (1995) 301–302

international journal of pharmaceutics

Book Review

Handbook of Pharmaceutical Excipients: 2nd Edn
Ainley Wade and Paul J. Weller (Eds)
Joint Publication of the American Pharmaceutical Association and The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1994.
ISBN: 0 85369 305 6 (UK); 0 91730 66 8 (USA).
Price £140; 672 pages.

Excipients are the additives used to convert pharmacologically active compounds into pharmaceutical dosage forms suitable for administration to patients. The first edition of The Handbook of Pharmaceutical Excipients was published in 1986 and it was the first English-language publication to describe comprehensively and systematically the chemical and physical properties of these substances. The first edition contained 145 monographs for pharmacopoeial and non-pharmacopoeial excipients and rapidly established itself worldwide as the primary source of information on pharmaceutical excipients.

The second edition of this Handbook has been greatly expanded and revised to include a new format for the monographs. It now contains 203 monographs – 58 new monographs in addition to the former 145 monographs which have been completely revised and updated. Among the new monographs are those on:

- Acesulfame potassium
- Albumin
- Ascorbyl palmitate
- Aspartame
- Benzethonium chloride
- Bronopol
- Canola oil
- Chlorodifluoroethane
- Chlorodifluoromethane
- Cresol
- Croscarmellose sodium
- Crospovidone
- Cyclodextrins
- Dextrates
- Difluoroethane
- Dimethyl ether
- Ethyl maltol
- Ethyl vanillin
- Fructose
- Glyceryl monooleate
- Glyceryl palmitostearate
- Imidurea
- Lactic acid
- Magnesium oxide
- Magnesium trisilicate
- Maltodextrin
- Maltol
- Medium chain triglycerides
- Meglumine
- Menthol
- Light mineral oil
- Nitrogen
- Oleic acid
- Phenol
- Phenoxyethanol
- Potassium chloride
- Propylene carbonate
- Propyl gallate
- Sodium cyclamate
- Monobasic sodium phosphate
- Sodium stearyl fumarate
- Soybean oil
- Sugar spheres
- Tartaric acid
- Tetrafluoroethane
- α-Tocopherol
- Triacetin
- Triethyl citrate
- Vanillin
- Hydrogenated vegetable oil
- Xanthan gum

0378-5173/95/$09.50
SSDI 0378-5173(95)00136-0

As with the first edition, each monograph gives essential data on the physical properties of excipients such as: boiling point; bulk and tapped density; compression characteristics; hygroscopicity; flowability; melting point; particle size distribution; specific surface area and solubility. Scanning electron micrographs are included for many of the monographs. Monographs also give details of stability and storage conditions; incompatibilities; safety; handling precautions and regulatory status. There is a list of specific references and also general references in each monograph.

The appendices: Suppliers' Directory (Appendix 1) and Laboratory Methods (Appendix 2) and the comprehensive index have likewise been revised and expanded. This new edition also contains additional information on the safe use of excipients and the adverse reactions associated with them. This is vital information, since excipients can no longer be regarded as physically inactive and there is a growing list of interactions between excipients and active ingredients which can seriously hazard the efficacy and safety of drug therapy.

The Handbook has been prepared by some 120 pharmaceutical scientists representing academic and industrial pharmacy in Europe and the USA. This collected expertise has provided a comprehensive and uniform guide to the uses, properties and safety of pharmaceutical excipients and it must be regarded as an essential reference source for all those workers and researchers involved in the formulation, development and production of pharmaceutical dosage forms.

The Handbook will also be of interest in other industries, since many pharmaceutical excipients have accepted and widespread use in the formulation and manufacture of cosmetics, confectionary and foods.

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