

Key points from first Uterotonic Drugs and Devices Task Force meeting December 9, 2005

- All three drugs associated with prevention of postpartum hemorrhage (PPH)—ergometrine for injection, misoprostol oral tablets, and oxytocin for injection—should be available in a country’s maternal/child health/reproductive health program. Each can play critical roles in multiple aspects of hemorrhage prevention and treatment. Even if one is the preferred choice for prevention in a particular country, the other two drugs should be available to serve their critical additional roles in treatment.
- To best preserve potency and shelf life, both ergometrine for injection and oxytocin for injection should be stored in a refrigerator. When comparing the two drugs, oxytocin for injection should be the preferred choice for many countries because:
 - Oxytocin can better withstand periods of unrefrigerated storage than ergometrine.
 - Oxytocin can better withstand exposure to light than ergometrine. Ergometrine loses potency very quickly when exposed to light.
- Midwives and other birth attendants must be given all necessary legal and regulatory permissions to administer oxytocin for injection for prevention of PPH to women giving birth outside of health care facilities. Oxytocin for injection must be made available to midwives and other birth attendants.
- Overcoming the obstacles to wider use of the current best practice for prevention of PPH—a safe injection of oxytocin from a vial or ampoule—should be the primary focus of the public health/maternal care community. This focus will complement, not complicate, ongoing work on potential improved products such as oxytocin in the Uniject™ device (Uniject is a trademark of BD) and misoprostol tablets. While these products may lead to better program and product opportunities in the future, oxytocin in vials or ampoules is available now and is World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) recommended drug for prevention of PPH.
- The purchase and distribution of drugs is a complex transaction involving the legal regulatory framework imposed by national drug control authorities (Federal Drug Administration (FDA), etc.), as well as the institutional procurement policies and practices of each purchasing organization. Here are descriptive definitions of terms that sometimes cause confusion in this context:
 - Registration or licensure usually refers to the legal permission to market a specific drug that a national drug control authority (FDA, etc.) grants to a drug company. While registration is legally required before a company can sell a drug in a country, it is not linked to ensuring a company succeeds in selling a drug in a country.
 - Prequalification usually refers to a process used by an organization purchasing drugs to determine which drug companies can likely meet supplier standards set by the purchasing organization. It is not a legal permission like registration; however, it is often a critical required step for a drug company wishing to sell to a specific individual purchaser.