

The first DPP-4 inhibitor (sitagliptin) has recently been licensed. These agents are taken orally, providing reductions in HbA<sub>1c</sub> which appear to be sustained over at least one year are weight neutral and with reduced risks of hypoglycaemia compared with sulphonylureas and insulin. Sitagliptin is licensed for combination therapy with metformin or a glitazone and has a good tolerability profile. The place in therapy of these agents will be discussed.

**Key words** Type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, islet cell dysfunction, insulin, incretins, GLP-1, DPP-4 inhibitors, exenatide, liraglutide, vildagliptin, sitagliptin.

**Sponsors** None.

**Declaration** Professor Barnett has been paid for advisory work and lectures, as well as provision of research support from relevant companies, including MSD, Novartis, Eli Lilly and Sanofi-Aventis.

## BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ

**The silent takeover. Global capitalism and the death of democracy**

Noreena Hertz  
ISBN 0099410591  
Arrow Books; 2000 £8.99

**The corporation. The pathological pursuit of power**

Joel Bakan  
ISBN 139781845291747  
Constable; 2004 £6.99

Few can be unaware of what is called the global economy, but how many are aware of the main players in this economy, their interaction, and the way in which they influence all our lives? These two books, each well worth reading, give an interesting and alarming insight into this global economy, and the extent to which it has reduced our control over our lives. The authors are well qualified to give us their views. Noreena Hertz was Associate Director of the Centre of International Business and Management at the Judge Institute of the University of Cambridge, and Joel Bakan was professor of law at the University of British Columbia with a distinguished legal career behind him.

Hertz describes the main components of the global economy, the structure within which capitalism operates, and the ways in which they interact. This includes national governments, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other international organisations,

the money markets and large international corporations, with the powerful Western economies having a dominant influence. National governments theoretically control the rules of international trade through the WTO, but corporations have become so powerful that they can coerce national governments and exercise considerable influence on the WTO. National governments often appear unwilling or unable to defend their electorates against the corporations, and to this Hertz attributes current disenchantment with politics and particularly politicians. Consumers and shareholders are the Achilles heels of the corporations, and opposition to corporations comes increasingly from them. These groups are themselves alliances of the better off, and how far they will be an influence for good remains to be seen.

Bakan turns his attention specifically to the corporations, and he does not like what he sees. He points out that they have no other function, in law or in practice, beyond maximising the

profits of their shareholders. Indeed, he points out that a corporation can only act legally for social benefit when that is commensurate with its duty to pursue profit. This has given rise to organisations devoid of loyalty, lacking any sense of obligation, and intent on observing the letter rather than the spirit of regulations designed to protect communities. The result is that corporations feel no obligation to the countries in which they originated, in which they operate, or to those they employ. Bakan points out, however, that just as corporations exist by virtue of law, they can also be changed by law, and he produces a cogent case for effecting such change.

Health and the provision of medical services depend greatly on economic factors, and doctors will want to understand what determines the welfare of their patients and the help they can be given. These two books can contribute to that understanding.

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