OBJECTIVE: To review original research studies published between 1990 and 2004 on the access and use of medicines in Mexico to assess the knowledge base for reforming Mexico's pharmaceutical policy. MATERIAL AND METHODS: A literature review using electronic databases was conducted of original studies published in the last 15 years about access and use of medicines in Mexico. In addition, a manual search of six relevant journals was performed. Excluded were publications on herbal, complementary and alternative medicines. RESULTS: Were identified 108 original articles as being relevant, out of 2289 titles reviewed, highlighting four policy-related problems: irrational prescribing, harmful self-medication, inequitable access, and frequent drug stock shortage in public health centers. CONCLUSIONS: This review identified two priorities for Mexico's pharmaceutical policy and strategies: tackling the irrational use of medicines and the inadequate access of medicines. These are critical priorities for a new national pharmaceutical policy.

Keywords
pharmaceutical policy, drug utilization, drug access, Mexico