Preface

Two major developments at the outset of 2009 lend a special timeliness to the publication of this book. First, the Democratic administration of President Barack Obama took the reigns of health policy in Washington, DC, promptly signaling a determination to reform the way that health care is provided in the United States. Second, a global financial crisis has sent shockwaves throughout virtually all sectors of economic activity in practically every country of the world. These two developments, taken together, suggest that policymakers will pay increasingly serious attention to the way medicines are developed, distributed and used.

Wealthier societies can no longer afford wasteful and ineffective public health expenditure. Poorer societies face even greater burdens than before. Governments throughout the developing world face extreme difficulty in funding medicines procurement. Under these background conditions, this book analyzes and offers suggestions to improve the global pharmaceutical regulatory system.

The originator pharmaceutical industry confronts its own financial crisis, and is unlikely to greet a critical examination of its role with equanimity. However, our objective is not to question the important role that industry plays in promoting research or manufacturing products of high quality. It is instead to ask whether there are better ways to make use of the vast resources committed in this field, and to improve the level of prevention and treatment available to everyone.

We hope you will find this book a useful contribution to the urgent dialogue.

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