

At one time, efforts were made to concentrate all buying within the months of January and February. In recent years, however there has been a shift toward year-round purchasing.

THE CUADRO BÁSICO

A *Cuadro Básico*, or basic formulary, is published by each health care organization in the fall of every year. This is the list from which all purchases must be selected. They are public documents and they are available through the purchasing entities themselves or the business and commercial chambers known as the *Cámaras*, which focus on medical interests. The names of key chambers are provided at the end of this profile. Each *Cuadro Básico* is up-dated on an annual basis. It can list more than 2,000 products, their reference numbers, and the technical criteria to which each product must adhere. All purchases in the coming year are governed by the criteria set out in the *Cuadro Básico*. Ensuring that a product corresponds to the exact product specifications as they appear in the *Cuadro Básico* is critical to success in the market.

If product specifications do not appear in the *Cuadro Básico*, appropriate steps must be taken to introduce changes in the following year's publication. In order to achieve a new registration, or a change of specifications, a company will need to approach physicians within the purchasing entity. They will have to be convinced about the merits of incorporating a product. A group of physicians then works internally to have the product or new specifications included in the following year. If a product is not in the *Cuadro Básico*, it cannot be ordered.

PUBLIC TENDERS

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The first step in the public tender process is the issuance of *avisos*, or tender notifications. Calls for tender are published in the *Diario Oficial*, the National Gazette, and they must be published in at least two national daily newspapers. The *Excelsior* and *El Universal* are commonly used. The notification will provide the bid reference number, the goods being purchased, the cost of the bid documents, and where and when they can be obtained.

A Canadian company, interested in competing for public contracts, will need a procedure for scanning the appropriate publications on a daily basis. Starting January 1, 1995, there will be a new publication for the release of public tender notices.

Public tenders are not used for small purchases. The thresholds for these discretionary purchases are set annually and vary among purchasing entities.

