

‘the little liar’ – patient information about medicines

There is an Italian expression used especially in Tuscany that refers to the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) as ‘il bugiardino’. It translates as ‘the little liar’.

L’Accademia della Crusca explains how the adjective ‘liar’ (bugiardo) can be used only for a person, as only people can conceive and tell lies, but that in this case it refers to an inanimate object – an informative text (as if it had agency, we may add). Its history may go back to the time when the first page of the newspapers used to be ‘posted’ outside of newspaper kiosks. PILs used to contain very little information about side effects, and may have deserved this same nickname previously given to the News. Now more information is available in the PILs but since quality and quantity of information is such that cannot be easily understood, it may still be appropriate to use this expression.

For research on PILs and patients views see for example the work of **Professor Theo Raynor** and Dr **Rebecca Dickinson**.

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