

Senator NELSON. Do all the various disciplines such as internal medicine have such a requirement?

Dr. CROUT. Not yet. There is a good deal of effort toward voluntary education and I believe that within a few years—

Senator NELSON. What is the nature of the courses of study that are required? Are these self-assessment tests mostly?

Dr. CROUT. That is an interesting question. Some are. Some are courses that people go to at medical meetings and some, as we will see, are articles in journals. Some courses and teaching materials we will see this morning.

Senator NELSON. How many of them have self-assessment tests, I think internal medicine may have a self-assessment test?

Dr. CROUT. Many have self-assessment tests.

Senator NELSON. What is the quality of these tests? Do they have a chance to review and evaluate?

Dr. CROUT. Some excellent and some poor. By and large the quality of the exam is good. The monitoring of them, the fact that they are graded by an outside party is not—but the examinations per se as teaching devices, I think, are acknowledged as good.

Senator NELSON. These tests—are most of them or all of them self-assessment tests?

Dr. CROUT. Yes.

Senator NELSON. Are they graded by somebody else?

Dr. CROUT. Usually not. One simply certifies that he has taken the test and will get an hour's credit.

Senator NELSON. How does he know whether he has kept up to date in some aspect of his discipline if it is not graded by an independent person? How does that work?

Dr. CROUT. This largely is a voluntary system at this point. The tests per se are rather good. The monitoring of them is poor. It is the monitoring, however, and the grading by an outside party which is the voluntary part of it, or at least is not done in the classical education mode of an outside teacher.

Senator NELSON. Does the one who takes the test get the results of the test?

Dr. CROUT. The self-assessment test comes with the answers in the same package. It is like doing a crossword puzzle and looking and finding the answers.

Senator NELSON. What is the objective of the test?

Dr. CROUT. Tests are, I think, rather routinely aimed at content, scientific content in particular articles. These are technical tests and you would recognize similar kinds in medical school.

Senator NELSON. The objective is to expose physicians to the most modern techniques and practices in his discipline, and then permit him to find out whether or not he is up to date. Is that correct?

Dr. CROUT. It is a test of what was in a particular article. The test will concern itself with the content of that particular learning system.

Senator NELSON. I thought the objective was to allow the physician to find out whether or not he is up to date on the most modern diagnostic practices, the utilization of drugs, or whatever he has in his discipline. Isn't that the function?