

Senator NELSON. The letter will appear in the record at the appropriate place. Please continue.

Dr. CROUT. In any event, and for whatever reasons, the editorial content of these controlled circulation journals is overwhelmingly optimistic about drug therapy. A recent editorial appeared in the January 1976 issue of *Current Prescribing*. The article, entitled "The Undermedicated Society," laments that underprescribing and not overprescribing is a major problem in American medicine. The author states:

The family physician's alleged propensity to overprescribe has provoked well-publicized investigations, both Congressional and clinical.

But what of the other side of the problem—underprescribing? Do doctors sometimes prescribe too little? In interviews with experts in several specialties, *Current Prescribing* found that the answer is yes. For many conditions, and with a number of drugs, M.D.'s may be giving their patients therapeutic short change.

I am submitting a copy on this article for the record.¹

The editorial position is not without merit, but several questions arise. The editorial writer was not a physician and had to seek advice about matters like underprescribing and overprescribing from physicians. In selecting his consultants, could the support of his magazine have affected his choices? Is a journal wholly dependent upon the pharmaceutical industry for support willing to editorialize on the excessive use of a drug class? Perhaps the answer is "yes," but one must wonder.

Senator NELSON. Well, let me ask a question. This committee has taken extensive testimony over an 8-year period from distinguished pharmacologists and without exception in that 8-year period there has not been a single medical expert who addressed himself to that question who did not say that drugs are widely overused or overprescribed. Is there any evidence that you are aware of that these experts are wrong? Chloramphenicol, is an example right off the top of my head. We took testimony from the late Dr. Dameshek of Mt. Sinai, and a half dozen others, I think Dr. Dameshek said that in his judgment perhaps the drug was indicated for only about 5 percent of the people who died from using it. The pathologist who testified thought that at the most it would be only 1 percent and that he had never seen a person who died from the use of chloramphenicol who had been given the drug for an indicated purpose. Go back to the studies by Drs. Stolley and Lasagna and other distinguished physicians who found that 95 percent of the doctors prescribed something for the common cold and that 65 percent prescribed an antibiotic.

In all the testimony we have taken, medical experts have testified that drugs are vastly overprescribed. Do you know of any studies which indicate that there is a massive underprescribing of drugs in this country?

Dr. CROUT. I think your subcommittee has very properly focused heavily in the area where there are more historical examples of overprescribing.

¹ See article, "The undermedicated society—charges of overprescribing are all the rage—but what about the equally dangerous tendency to underprescribe?," from *Current Prescribing*, Jan. 1976, page 14117.