

Another project in which we are active is called AVENS, audio-visual education in neurosurgery. That is a video cassette, monograph, and slide service, what is popularly termed a multimedia system. Subjects and their presenters are chosen by the Society of Neurological Surgeons which began the project with the support of a grant from the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. The programs are sold to neurosurgical training centers and to individual neurosurgeons. But as the number of subscribers is small—about 125 have bought the first series of 10 programs—the project is far from self-sustaining. Because the distribution and production apparatus constructed for NCME is available to us, we can continue AVENS at our own expense and we are doing so. Some of the programs are said to be among the better teaching of any sort ever done in neurosurgery. Without foundation support, however, AVENS could not have been begun and without our own assistance, I am not sure it could continue.

Senator NELSON. How does AVENS, audiovisual education in neurosurgery, fit in with your NCME program? Are they related? How does that work?

Mr. RAEBEN. Well, there is an overlay of some staff and technical facilities. Were it not for that overlay, I think the point I was making was that AVENS probably could not exist. It is independent of it in every other sense. And, of course, there is no pharmaceutical company involved in AVENS.

Senator NELSON. What you are saying, then, is that there is no funding directly for this specific project by pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. RAEBEN. That is correct.

Senator NELSON. Go ahead.

Mr. RAEBEN. The next project we are engaged in is the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology which was established in 1971 as continuing education in video cassette form. We act as the academy's video publisher. Production moneys have been provided by the academy. Program subjects and presenters are selected by the academy, and the majority of programs are produced by the presenter, often with university television facilities. The programs are sold to ophthalmologists and otolaryngologists. About 200 subscriptions have been sold to each group. The cost to duplicate, market, and distribute these programs is borne by VIS. The service will require a very substantial increase in sales to be self-sustaining. As with AVENS, we are pleased to be associated with the project because, in the long run, it should enhance our position as a publisher of good medical education in television form. As with AVENS, however, it raises the question, can such education exist at present, and in these forms, without subsidization?

Physicians Radio Network, or PRN, is our most recent service. It is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week medical news, information and education service for physicians. It is transmitted over special FM frequencies. It requires a special receiver provided by us without charge to the doctor.

Senator NELSON. Does Physicians Radio Network then have an FM channel of its own?