

INDUSTRY-SPONSORED SEMINARS

The drug industry sponsors numerous medical symposia and seminars. These have been discussed in Pills, Profits, and Politics, by Silverman and Lee, as follows: "One customarily practiced device is the drug industry sponsored conference or symposium devoted either to a particular new drug product or to a clinical problem in which the product may seem to have value. The nominal host may be a medical group, a medical school, or a medical or scientific academy. The speakers may include various Americans, although European participants supposedly provide desirable glamour. It is generally considered useful to include a hundred or more physicians in the audience of newspaper, magazine and trade journal writers. The indoctrination of the doctor in the audience is viewed as helpful, but more importance is placed on the accounts filed by the press representatives present and on the formal published proceedings of the conference, which may be used for months as 'scientific' background."

Since the publication of the Silverman and Lee book, the live audience has been extended by the use of closed circuit live television. In January 1976, Pfizer Laboratories, Division of Pfizer, Inc., sponsored such a closed circuit nationally televised seminar on the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes mellitus. The program seminar provided a learned discussion of this disease but attempted to steer clear of the findings of the University Group Diabetes Program (UGDP) and the resulting adverse publicity surrounding oral hypoglycemic drugs, including Pfizer's Diabinese.