

14082 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

Video Tapes

Visual Information Systems also produces the Network of Continuing Medical Education, a biweekly, hour-long video-tape distributed to hospitals, courtesy of Roche Laboratories, division of Hoffmann-LaRoche, Inc.

Nearly every major pharmaceutical company is engaged in producing materials for continuing education. These materials commonly use formats one associates with disinterested educational efforts--i.e., expert panels and lectures by distinguished physicians. Despite their appearance, and despite the fact that they may be generally accurate, they are often promotional of particular drugs or drug classes and, on the whole, are one-sided. One does not often find in these materials the sort of healthy skepticism of a particular therapy that a journal like the Medical Letter brings to its readers. Typically, one does not see on such panels those physicians who believe oral hypoglycemic agents are dangerous, who believe antianxiety agents and sedatives are overprescribed, or who think that hyperactivity in children is overdiagnosed and overtreated with drugs. The result is a tone of therapeutic optimism, uncritical review of the subject and lack of balance.

I want to illustrate the kinds of materials I am talking about by showing a few examples of industry-sponsored educational materials related to the use of psychoactive drugs.