

STATEMENT OF THOMAS M. GELLERT, M.D., HUNTINGTON, N.Y.

Dr. GELLERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am here today as a private practitioner, and, therefore, for myself, and as an unofficial representative of 250 physicians who decided to attack this problem of drug abuse, particularly amphetamines, and without waiting for guidelines, prohibition, and coercion, and I also speak as one who has been active in the county medical association of the county and the city of Huntington, and which is made up of 200,000 people on the eastern end of Long Island, and also as one who understands somewhat the governmental problems, and as one who has also served on the county board of health.

We in Huntington are very proud of our efforts, and are gratified by the results, but now, 5 years after deciding to stick to our principles, we are convinced that some form of Federal regulation is necessary if we are really to succeed.

Our community is Huntington, N.Y., and just a couple of weeks ago, when "60 Minutes" came on, we were sort of designated the amphetamine capital of the universe.

This is certainly not the case, but I would like to tell you how this came about.

We in Huntington are a township of about 200,000 people, we consider ourselves quite enlightened. We were among the first in the country to set up the youth board, an organization responsible for handling problems with our youth.

I believe you have already heard from some of our representatives who spoke before this subcommittee last week.

When heroin became a problem in our community, our hospital donated facilities, our hospital-pharmacy donated time and the nurses donated their time, and we set up a free methadone clinic to help control the heroin difficulty, and then when amphetamines appeared on the scene, Huntington physicians decided to stop writing amphetamine prescriptions.

We hoped that by this voluntary act that we would remove a sizable number of these drugs from circulation and reduce the number of drugs which could be abused.

To accomplish this task we conducted seminars, distributed the latest scientific data, held hospital staff meetings, and met with community agencies.

After examining the evidence it was clear to anyone familiar with evaluating scientific data that, except for the rare problems of narcolepsy and the treatment of certain types of hyperactive children, amphetamines had no bona fide use in the practice of medicine.

Specifically, there was more than enough evidence to support the conclusion that amphetamines had no place in the treatment of obesity.

Overnight the prescribing habits of Huntington physicians changed. From several hundred amphetamine prescriptions a year, the average pharmacy found it was dispensing only one or two amphetamine prescriptions a month.

Some pharmacies filled none over periods of several months.

Some time after our voluntary amphetamine ban, I recall speaking to a pharmaceutical house representative who observed that contrary