

14656 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

1971 through 1973 there was a particularly dramatic decline in the prescribing of amphetamines. The number of manufacturers of these drugs also dropped considerably during that period. Since 1973 the usage of amphetamines has remained fairly constant at a rate about one-fifth that of the peak year in 1965. The non-amphetamine anorectic drugs have increased in popularity since 1971 and are now prescribed roughly twice as often as the amphetamines. The rate of prescribing of the whole class of anorectic drugs is today approximately 60 percent of the peak rate in the mid-1960's.

I would now like to turn to the issue of abuse of the anorectic drugs. Before doing so, however, I must emphasize the limitations of the data currently available for presentation. As I previously noted, an analysis of the abuse potential and actual abuse of the anorectics is underway by DEA, and we look forward to receiving their findings. My comments today are, therefore, based only on gross data from the DAWN system. By way of background, the DAWN system lists "mentions" of a drug during the contact of an individual at certain crisis centers (including "Hot Lines"), emergency rooms, and medical examiners or coroners offices throughout the country. The "mention" of a drug can thus range from a telephone call to an overdose death. It should also be noted that "mentions" of drugs frequently occur in combination. A specific drug is not necessarily the cause of the episode. For example, if amphetamine is mentioned in an emergency room contact, the person may have, as his primary problem, an overdose of heroin but may also have taken an amphetamine. More sophisticated analysis is thus necessary before a full picture is available of the societal problems associated with anorectic abuse.