

14708 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

could expand claims for their products and advertise their usefulness in an unlimited range of areas. Some drug firms obtained patents for their amphetamine congeners and combinations on the basis of these drugs' alleged "antidepressant" actions, and then expanded their advertising claims to include the "treatment" of conditions as disparate as obesity, alcoholism, enuresis, and so on; others took different tacks, starting from the claim that their product was "uniquely effective" in the treatment of obesity, but proceeded to employ the same basic tactics. Somehow, supporting articles and thinly disguised testimonials invariably appeared in "reputable" medical organs like the Journal of the American Medical Association just prior to the publication of advertisements extending the reasons for prescribing amphetamines. Although only a few of these reports were exposed as fraudulent, most of them were clearly biased, did not use random sampling or double-blind techniques, and frequently arrived at conclusions which were dubious.

Complementing the enthusiastic over-prescribing of amphetamines by physicians is the fact that since the 1930's there have been several ways in which the public could procure these euphorants with little or no assistance or interference from organized medicine, the Food and Drug Administration, or any state or federal drug abuse control authorities. First, of course, there were the inhalers. Although Smith, Kline & French held the patent on the "Benzedrine" inhaler until 1960, other drug companies quickly realized that they could sell their own imitations without fear of patent-infringement suit because "Benzedrine" was only one of an almost unlimited variety of equally stimulating, euphorogenic, and toxic amphetamine congeners. By the end of World War II, there were at least seven different inhalers on the market containing large amounts of these drugs, and all