

They have told us of the excessive use of steroids resulting in perforated peptic ulcer or explosive flareups of tuberculosis and other diseases.

They have told us of cases of permanent brain damage caused by excessive use of antipsychotic tranquilizers, and sometimes by such tranquilizers given to control bed wetting or nailbiting in children, or an inability to get along in school.

We do not know how often such tragedies occur. In most cases, it seems, neither the patient nor his family, nor even the physician, is aware that the irrational use of a drug was responsible.

One fact that may possibly be related is that generally throughout the Latin American countries there is no such thing as medical malpractice. Malpractice suits are unknown.

Another related factor may be the influence and the numbers of detail men, or the *visitadores*. In the United States, we calculate that there is one detail man for every 10 physicians. In Ecuador, there is one for every eight physicians. In Columbia, there is one for every five. And in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil, there is one for about every three. There are some physicians in Latin America who take advice from none of these *visitadores*, whom they call visiting professors of therapeutics. In some cases, they will not even let the detail men into their offices or their hospitals. There are other physicians who take advice only from these company representatives.

Senator BEALL. Are these educated people?

Dr. SILVERMAN. Well, they are educated. In some countries they are required to have a high school diploma. In other countries, the requirements are a little more vigorous. And I believe it is Costa Rica that is now implementing a law that they must have a degree either in pharmacy or in medicine.

Senator BEALL. But primarily they are salesmen. Is that correct?

Dr. SILVERMAN. Yes, sir.

Senator BEALL. Thank you.

Mr. GORDON. May I ask a question at this point, Mr. Chairman?

Is there any possibility that any of these drugs, like chloramphenicol, for instance, might be less dangerous for people in Latin America than for those in the United States?

Dr. SILVERMAN. Mr. Gordon, this arose when the first reports came, I believe, from Bogota, Colombia. Somebody wrote a letter to the *New England Journal of Medicine* saying,

Isn't it marvelous that Chloromycetin produces these horrible results in Europe and North America but it does not happen in Colombia. It must be something in the genetic system of Colombians that protects them.

And this brought on a torrent of letters from hematologists and pathologists who said that this is a lot of nonsense; that there had been many, many deaths from aplastic anemia. And he said "All you have to do is start looking for them and you will find them."

The best information we can get now—and this comes primarily from hematologists in Mexico—is that there is a higher susceptibility to aplastic anemia that may be related in part to the proportion of Indian blood in the national blood pool. We are certainly not aware of any genetic protection that keeps Latin Americans immune from these unhappy side effects.