

Anticonvulsants

Our last group includes three anticonvulsants widely used for the control of epilepsy. One is diphenylhydantoin, or phenytoin, marketed by Parke-Davis as Dilantin and by McKesson as Kessodantin. The promotion of the Parke-Davis product discloses only a few hazards in Mexico, fewer still in Colombia and Ecuador, and none in Central America. Only one warning is presented for the McKesson product in Central America, Colombia, and Ecuador, and no adverse reactions are disclosed.

A similar situation was found for Sandoz's Mesantoin, with only one warning presented to physicians in the Central American countries, and no adverse reactions disclosed.

With Ciba-Geigy's Tegretol, numerous adverse reactions are disclosed to physicians in the United States, a few to their colleagues in Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador, but none to physicians in Central America or Brazil.

It is difficult to estimate with any precision the prices that patients are forced to pay for this kind of promotion--pay not in terms of pesos or quetzals or colones, but in needless injury and needless death.

Information on the frequency of adverse drug reactions in Latin America is far from adequate, just as it is far from adequate in the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, in every country in which we have worked, medical experts--especially hematologists, pathologists, and microbiologists --have expressed