

As an example of what can happen in this complex situation, we observed the case of a woman—thin, nervous, jittery—who went into a large pharmacy in Costa Rica and asked by name for a potent tranquilizer. The clerk said he had something far better, and sold her a supply of what we recognized as a powerful but dangerous thyroid drug. It may have been the appropriate drug for her. But what made the event memorable is that we were unable to tell whether the clerk—who acted without consulting any of his colleagues—was aged 14, 13, or 12.

Since these findings were published in May of 1976, and simultaneously presented in testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Monopoly, there have been signs that the situa-

tion may be corrected more swiftly than had been anticipated.

•The findings were widely reported throughout Latin America by newspapers, radio and television.

•In a number of global drug companies, some officials—especially those concerned with research and medical affairs—are urging their firms to follow the same promotional policies they use in the United States in all their foreign promotion.

•The United States delegation to the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers has called for standardized drug promotion, worldwide, with full disclosure of hazards.

•At least one major drug company in this country has already changed its promotion in Central America, limiting the claims for its products and disclosing their dangers.

Until all companies follow this lead, however, many physicians and pharmacists in many countries may continue to be uninformed or misinformed, and travelers should remain forewarned.

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