

16590 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

concluded that:

"[D-propoxyphene] has addictive liability. This is indicated by, (a) the induction of opiate-like symptoms when administered in large oral doses to former opiate-addicts, (b) its ability to partially suppress signs of abstinence from morphine, (c) the production of consistent, although very mild, signs of abstinence when the drug was abruptly discontinued after 53 or 54 days of addiction in five subjects."⁷⁶

Four years later these investigators undertook controlled experiments which suggested that the addictive potential of DPX was "substantially less than that of codeine."⁷⁷

Case reports tend to substantiate the claim that the physical dependence produced by DPX is generally moderate; however, psychological dependence can be significant. Elson and Domino reported a case of DPX addiction "characterized by extreme psychic craving, euphoria, and tolerance to the dextropropoxyphene hydrochloride...The patient showed definite withdrawal signs, including chills, profuse perspiration, cramping, abdominal pain, headaches, nervousness and diarrhea."⁷⁸ (emphasis added)

Reviewing the literature on DPX dependence in 1971 (six published reports), Salter stated:

"It is evident from these reports that propoxyphene can produce both strong psychological dependence and some degree of physical dependence, although quantitatively, less than that of morphine or codeine. Significant tolerance does occur and mild to moderate withdrawal symptoms may sometimes be elicited in a dependent person by sudden discontinuance of the propoxyphene."⁷⁹ (emphasis added)

Occasionally physical withdrawal symptoms may be severe. Mattson et al. described 4 patients chronically dependent on high doses of DPX:

"Not only did the patients continue using the drug for its psychic effect, but 3 of them were unable to stop because discontinuation produced withdrawal symptoms characterized by perspiration, tremulousness, and nausea which were promptly relieved when more propoxyphene was taken. One patient developed a severe delirium lasting four days after discontinuation of the drug."⁸⁰