

By this time tomorrow, 10 more U.S. citizens will have died from propoxyphene overdose and most of these will have been preventable accidents. I think the time has come to put a stop to it.

Thank you.

Senator NELSON. So it is your conclusion after looking at what you conclude to be the best statistical evaluations—in North Carolina, San Francisco, and Oregon—that in fact a substantial percentage, a majority of deaths, are accidental and not intentional?

Dr. LEWMAN. I believe they are in my jurisdiction.

Dr. Hudson apparently does not think so. We have not compared toxicological data.

In my cases: First we look at the background history of the patient, is there an empty bottle of pills filled 2 hours ago or is there not.

The toxicologic data is very significant. We find a high nor-propoxyphene/propoxyphene ratio and low stomach (gastric) totals in accidental cases. If we look at the suicide cases, we find a large amount of propoxyphene in the stomach. This indicates the individual has ingested a large amount of medication at once.

In suicide cases, we find a higher ratio of propoxyphene to nor-propoxyphene. So I do not reach this conclusion just on toxicology, but on the entire spectrum of the investigation of the death.

Senator NELSON. Do you see any inconsistency in having methadone listed on schedule II and propoxyphene not?

Dr. LEWMAN. Oh, absolutely.

I think I have had two cases of methadone deaths in the last year.

You can say this about any of the narcotics in schedule II. Propoxyphene is hands down by a multiple of several times more common as a cause of drug overdose death than any of them.

Senator NELSON. And how is propoxyphene related to methadone?

Dr. LEWMAN. It is chemically very similar.

I could not draw the structure. Dr. McBay could probably address himself to that question better than I.

They are chemically very similar. They are both narcotics.

Senator NELSON. Thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate the time that all of you have taken from your busy work to come here to testify on this important subject, and if you have any additional material you wish to submit, the record will be open for another 2 weeks.

Senator LEVIN. Mr. Chairman, I wonder in that regard, if we could have comments, either now briefly or in writing, as to your duty and responsibility of your profession, I gather in future hearings we will be hearing from Lilly as to their defense, and so forth, but one of the most striking things in the hearings this morning is apparently the inadequacy of the professional defense that is perceived by the four obviously qualified people is a problem.

I know this is not the purpose of the hearing, whether we could have some thought addressed to that, I think the first line of defense probably is the profession against this kind of problem, the Government is slow to act, and I am just wondering if there are any brief thoughts, it is kind of late for this, but perhaps later in writing, you gentlemen could give us some brief thoughts.

Senator NELSON. Fine.