

16814 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

Neither does propoxyphene cause drowsiness or constipation to the same extent as codeine. Addiction liability from propoxyphene is relatively low, compared to that from morphine and other Schedule II narcotics. This factor is the major reason it was placed in Schedule IV rather than Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) in 1977. The most prominent safety problem associated with propoxyphene is the risk of death due to overdosage--a problem whose extent has become apparent only in recent years.

Fourth, propoxyphene has been skillfully marketed in an array of dosage forms, combinations, and salts that offer physicians a wide variety of options for managing patients with painful disorders.

And finally, no other prescription analgesic possesses a combination of properties so attractive to the general physician for the management of patients with mild to moderate pain. Propoxyphene-containing products have been prescribed for nearly two decades on the assumption that they were safe, relatively low in addiction potential, and more effective than over-the-counter drugs. Codeine, which has been classified in Schedule II for some time because of its well-known dependence liability, is the only other prescription analgesic with similar usage.

In the past four years the number of prescriptions written annually for propoxyphene products has declined by about 15 percent. This drop-off parallels a similar but more moderate decrease in the rate of prescriptions for all drugs. We attribute this decline to a