

Now, we had some preliminary discussions with Dr. Finkle hoping that, perhaps in concert with interested members of industry and Government, a more precise evaluation of the dimensions of the problem could be undertaken in the next few years.

I must emphasize these are very preliminary discussions, and there is no guarantee that they will provide answers to these questions, but they are questions which desperately need addressing.

Senator WEICKER. Thank you.

Senator NELSON. Senator Levin?

Senator LEVIN. In 1972 you wrote a letter apparently at the request of FDA at least according to their testimony, "There is no substantial evidence to demonstrate that 65 milligrams of Darvon is more effective than 650 milligrams of aspirin."

I guess that is comparing one Darvon.

Dr. FURMAN. One Darvon to two aspirin.

Senator LEVIN. And the preponderance of evidence indicates it may be somewhat less benefit. Was that true then in your opinion? If so, is it still true?

Dr. FURMAN. By "preponderance of evidence" they meant well-controlled, double-blind, placebo studies, and I think literally that was correct at that time.

Senator LEVIN. And now?

Dr. FURMAN. I think there are studies which compare propoxyphene hydrochloride, 65 milligrams, or napsylate, 100 milligrams, favorably with aspirin but do not demonstrate greater efficacy.

I want to make it abundantly clear that aspirin is a truly remarkable drug—it lowers temperature and it is being used and evaluated for people with coronary heart disease and stroke. We are not embarrassed that propoxyphene and two aspirin tablets are equal.

Senator LEVIN. Are there many people would you estimate now that are using propoxyphene that could get equal results from aspirin?

Dr. FURMAN. That is a very difficult question to answer, Senator, because people who are now relying on propoxyphene for relief and control of pain, by and large, are people who have had access previously to acetaminophen and aspirin. Somehow or other, sooner or later, they got a prescription from their doctor for propoxyphene and have found that propoxyphene or propoxyphene-combined products effectively do the job.

Senator LEVIN. Have you authorized studies, your company that is, comparing the efficacy of aspirin and propoxyphene?

Dr. FURMAN. Yes, sir, we have.

Senator LEVIN. Could you estimate how many of those studies have taken place? Are those double-blind studies?

Dr. FURMAN. Some were. Some of the early studies of propoxyphene compared with aspirin and codeine were double-blind studies. I could not tell you how many, offhand.

Senator LEVIN. Would there be many?

Dr. FURMAN. Several.

Senator LEVIN. Could you furnish us all of the studies you have authorized, all the double-blind studies you have authorized comparing propoxyphene with aspirin and codeine?

Dr. FURMAN. We would be glad to do that.

Senator LEVIN. Thank you.