

Senator NELSON. You made a suggestion as to how this question ought to be tackled. Is there any reason why, for example, the FDA might not, through a series of arrangements, contract with your medical school and your hospital to do a certain amount of testing, and contract with half a dozen or whatever it may be, a dozen medical schools with associated teaching hospitals. They could contract in various ways for testing chemically the drugs that are coming out, to see what their potency is, and make double blind studies of various drugs, to see whether they have therapeutic value that is asserted for them? Does that strike you as a problem that is too large for the Government to tackle and successfully meet?

Dr. WILLIAMS. I think it is best to state that it is a problem that is so large that only the Government can tackle it. This is what we wind up with.

I think, in addition to the pathways you have mentioned, that I would like to emphasize that the Government treats an enormous pool of patients in Veterans' Administration and similar organizations, and I think that these studies frequently can be effectively done within this sort of organization, not experiments with new drugs necessarily, but the critical comparison of older drugs with newer drugs.

Senator NELSON. There is at least—I don't know anything about the field—there is at least two things that can be done. One of them is to do a chemical analysis of the various drugs and determine whether they are in the potency range that is established by the pharmacologist. That produces one result.

Then there is the other question of doing your clinical studies to find out the therapeutic comparisons between these drugs and a placebo on these drugs and other drugs.

Dr. WILLIAMS. The first is easy. This can be done in a Government laboratory.

The second is difficult, because it requires the cooperation of the medical profession at large, including as you mentioned, the medical schools and so on.

Senator NELSON. You think it would be relatively easy to test the potency of all prescription drugs on the market, and to run a continuous testing of them?

Dr. WILLIAMS. I think what will probably happen is that—

Senator NELSON. I am talking about the chemical testing.

Dr. WILLIAMS. I am talking about the chemical testing.

I think what will probably happen is that as the Food and Drug Administration continues its present area of functioning, that manufacturers who do not maintain the standards which should guarantee adequate potency in the drugs, their license to manufacture will be taken away from them.

I mean this is an area where if the Food and Drug Administration were actually able to do the policing job that it already had the powers to do, the fly-by-night bucketshop operator that you hear so much about, producing supposedly spurious drugs, simply could not operate.

Senator NELSON. In terms of the size of the problem, I don't know what to compare it to, but every meatpacker in the United States that ships any meat in interstate commerce, which is most of them, have on the job in the plant a Federal meat inspector whose salary is paid for by the packer himself.