

Senator NELSON. Let me put the question the other way. Supposing somebody had decided that the generic name ought to be Serpasil, and some company decided that their brand name ought to be reserpine. Would it make any difference?

Dr. GARB. No. A name is a name. The whole point is that you cannot rely upon names to give you chemical structures or anything else unless they are the long chemical names. The name of a drug is exactly as useful as the name of a person. You can call a person John, or you can call a person Dick. The names tell you nothing more than the identity of the individual.

Senator NELSON. So then in devising an official name or a generic name, the idea ought to be to devise a simple, pronounceable name; is that correct?

Dr. GARB. Yes, sir. It should be simple, it should be pronounceable, and above all, it should be so designed that it cannot be confused with another drug. This is a key point. We do have a case where there are two drugs with similar generic names. This is bad. One is digitoxin and one is digoxin. They are both cardiac glycosides. The names are so close together that confusion exists at times and doctors might make a mistake or pharmacists might make a mistake, and this is not good. So the names should be distinct enough so that they cannot be confused with any other drug by any person.

Senator NELSON. Does there have to be approval by FDA or any other official agency of the trade name or product name that a private manufacturer attaches to a generic drug?

Dr. GARB. To the best of my knowledge, no, but this is not an area I am familiar with. I am not familiar with the law in this respect.

Senator NELSON. The two names you gave, digitoxin, and what was the other?

Dr. GARB. And digoxin are generic names.

Senator NELSON. Are generic names?

Dr. GARB. Are generic names. They go back into history, and it is unfortunate that we have two generic names which are so close that they can be confused.

Senator NELSON. Who created those names?

Dr. GARB. I don't know.

Senator NELSON. They are old?

Dr. GARB. They are old.

Senator NELSON. Go ahead.

Senator HATFIELD. Excuse me, doctor.

Dr. GARB. Yes, sir.

Senator HATFIELD. Are there any generic names, or rather brand names that through long usage have become generic names?

Dr. GARB. The only one that I can think of offhand is aspirin.

Senator NELSON. Go ahead.

Dr. GARB. Most of our existing drugs, however, have long, complicated, almost unpronounceable names such as sulfamethoxypyridazine, zoxazolamine, bendroflumethiazide, benztropine methanesulfonate, oxyphencyclimine hydrochloride, methylbenzethonium chloride, chlorzoxazone, iodochlorhydroxyquin, triacetyloleandomycin, and so forth.

Senator NELSON. What do these generic names accomplish?