

TABLE 1

Miltown		Meprobamate	
Retail stores	Price	Source	Price
Chainstores A:			
1.....	\$5.75	Davis-Edwards.....	\$2.55
2.....	3.83	Wyeth Laboratories (Equanil).....	3.83
3.....	4.55	Davis-Edwards.....	2.77
4.....	3.82	do.....	2.55
Chainstores B:			
1.....	4.50	American Pharmaceuticals.....	2.90
2.....	4.25	do.....	2.90
3.....	4.25	Wyeth Laboratories (Equanil).....	4.50
4.....	4.50	American Pharmaceuticals.....	2.90
5.....	4.50	do.....	2.90
Individual pharmacies:			
1.....	6.10	West-ward.....	4.90
2.....	5.50	do.....	3.65
3.....	4.40	Wyeth Laboratories (Equanil).....	4.40
4.....	4.35	Schein.....	4.35
5.....	4.20	Riverton.....	2.38
6.....	4.00	McKesson Laboratories.....	4.00
7.....	5.75	West-ward.....	4.25
8.....	5.50	Wyeth Laboratories (Equanil).....	5.50
9.....	6.50	McKesson Laboratories.....	5.25
10.....	6.00	do.....	4.35
11.....	6.35	Roder.....	6.35
12.....	6.50	McKesson Laboratories.....	4.25
13.....	3.95	Wolins Pharmacal.....	2.40
14.....	4.50	Wallace Laboratories (Miltown).....	5.50
Mean.....	4.94	Mean.....	3.88

DISCUSSION

Since meprobamate purchased by generic name is cheaper than the brand name product, the crux of the problem is whether the two are identical in therapeutic efficacy. Several examples have been reported [3-5] for other drugs which demonstrated that neither the United States Pharmacopeia (USP), National Formulary standards, nor Food and Drug Administration regulations assure the therapeutic equivalence of generically identical pharmaceutical products. The therapeutic effect of a drug preparation depends upon the compatibility, purity, solubility, particle size, vehicle, percentage of active ingredient, melting point, pH, allergic effects, disintegration time, quality control, and effect of storage to name only a few of the factors involved. Although we did not analyze the tablets we purchased for meprobamate content, a survey reported in *Medical Letter* [1] showed that meprobamate tablets from all ten companies checked by them met USP standards for content. There can be little question of differences in the quality of the meprobamate powder itself in generic and brand name products since it is all prepared by a few manufacturers according to specifications of Carter Wallace, the parent company of Wallace Laboratories.

Although our study demonstrated that meprobamate could be purchased more cheaply by generic equivalent, this is admittedly a small survey and involves only one drug. In an editorial in the *Rhode Island Medical Journal* [6], a survey of the Division of Public Assistance of that State is quoted as indicating that the saving from prescribing by generic name, where possible, in 10,000 prescriptions would be only 5 per cent. However, in a recent report to Congress, the U.S. Comptroller General indicated that if drugs for the welfare recipients of the State of Pennsylvania were prescribed by generic equivalent, the State could have saved \$722,000 to \$1,500,000 in fiscal year 1964.

One factor against prescribing by generic name has been the complexity of this name supposedly making even the organic chemist cringe. To some extent this has been true in the past. However, the nonproprietary nomenclature has been simplified and standardized by a committee composed of representatives of the USP, National Formulary, and American Medical Association. The names adopted by this committee are designated as United States Adopted Names (USAN) [7]. The guiding principles of this committee are that the names should be distinctive in sound and spelling, conveniently short, should indicate general pharmacological or therapeutic class, and the general chemical nature of the