

I might say that this Medical Letter, in addition to publishing my assay results, also publishes the price per 1,000 tablets.

Mr. GORDON. May I ask a question here?

I notice that the prices vary considerably, and the highest priced version of the drug had 101.4 percent of the active ingredient; that is, chlorpheniramine, and the lowest priced version had 103.7 percent.

Can you tell us if this has any significance?

Dr. FITELSON. No. They are both well within the Pharmacopeia limits in the first place, and then it is hard to believe that 1 or 2 percent makes any particular difference in a drug, particularly in a drug which is not a potent drug.

Mr. GORDON. So it is really not meaningful—

Dr. FITELSON. No.

Mr. GORDON (continuing). To say one is better than the other?

Dr. FITELSON. It is not meaningful at all. Anything within the Pharmacopeia limits is quite acceptable.

Sometime later we ran another series of tests.

Senator NELSON. You are going to a different drug?

Dr. FITELSON. Going to a different drug.

Senator NELSON. May I ask a question before you do?

Dr. FITELSON. Yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. These were the 20 companies—

Dr. FITELSON. Twenty different companies; yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. And all of them met USP standards?

Dr. FITELSON. That is correct.

Senator NELSON. Can it be concluded from that then that each of them had the same therapeutic value?

Dr. FITELSON. I am sure that is a correct conclusion, since they were exactly the same drug in all tablets, and the variations were not significant.

Senator NELSON. May I ask, this was not a test on all companies that make this drug, was it?

Dr. FITELSON. I doubt it. There must be others besides the ones we tested.

Senator NELSON. So do we have a situation where drugs meeting the same Pharmacopeia standards range in price from \$1.40 for 1,000 tablets?

Dr. FITELSON. Per 1,000.

Senator NELSON. To \$17.50 for 1,000 tablets?

Dr. FITELSON. That is correct.

Senator NELSON. Insofar as U.S. Pharmacopeia is concerned, they are of equal value as drugs; is that correct?

Dr. FITELSON. That is correct; yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. May I ask Dr. Garb a question?

Dr. GARB. Yes, sir.

Senator NELSON. As a physician, do you visualize that there would be any difference between these two drugs from a therapeutic value, or to put it another way, if you had this history before you and were to prescribe, would you have any hesitation about prescribing any one, regardless of the price here, for your patient?

Dr. GARB. I can see no reason to have any hesitation.

I would say that if anybody wishes to argue against the significance of this fine study, the burden of proof would have to be on them.