

Senator NELSON. How are the 10 individual tablets from the same company selected?

Dr. FITELSON. At random. I am given a vial of some 50 or 60 tablets to test and we pick out those 10 at random and run those separately, individually.

Senator NELSON. Is it known whether they came out of the same batch or not?

Dr. FITELSON. I presume they did because when they are purchased they are probably purchased out of one bottle.

Mr. GORDON. Although there are tablet variations within a bottle; that is, the tablets really are not identical, nevertheless, as I understand it, they are claimed to be therapeutically equivalent, are they not?

Dr. FITELSON. Oh, yes. The U.S. Pharmacopeia specifies a certain limitation on individual tablets as well as on the composite of the tablets, and they are all therapeutically equivalent so far as I know.

Senator NELSON. This was a test of 20 again, was it?

Dr. FITELSON. Twenty-two different pharmaceutical companies, and this is published in the Medical Letter of June 2, 1967, just a few weeks ago.

Senator NELSON. And you found that all 22 met USP standards?

Dr. FITELSON. All 22 met all of the U.S. Pharmacopeia standards.

Senator NELSON. And in this case, then, the price variation was from a low of 59 cents per 100 to as high as \$17.90 per 100?

Dr. FITELSON. That is right.

Mr. GORDON. Dr. Fitelson, have you had any reaction from drug companies since this report has come out?

Dr. FITELSON. I personally would not have a reaction, since this comes through the Medical Letter. I do not know what reactions they have had.

Mr. GORDON. Did you want to comment, Dr. Garb?

Dr. GARB. I do have a comment.

This may illustrate one of the points I have been trying to make. According to this you will notice that the Merck product is \$2.20 a 100, and the Parke, Davis product is \$17.88 a 100. In other words, the Parke, Davis product is more than eight times as expensive as the Merck product.

Now here we have a fantastic spread. Both companies have good research programs. Both companies do promotion, et cetera. I would hardly think that anybody would ever complain that Merck is not as good or as reliable a company as Parke, Davis. Merck is selling this at one-eighth the cost of Parke, Davis, but how does the doctor know about this?

How does he even know that the two medicines are the same considering the way the names are confused?

In other words, if the doctor is thinking in terms of Deltra and Paracort, if he does not know they are the same material he may prescribe the more expensive one but if he knows they are both prednisone, if he knows that Merck's prednisone is one-eighth of the cost of Parke, Davis' prednisone, he would almost certainly prescribe Merck's prednisone all the way through. This is, I think, an excellent illustration of what happens when drugs are sold by private product name.