

Senator NELSON. I note that under item 3, where you stated that illness due to drugs was the seventh most common cause of hospitalization.

Dr. CLUFF. That is correct.

Senator NELSON. It is a rather startling statistic.

Dr. CLUFF. It was to me too, Senator Nelson, when I first uncovered it.

Senator NELSON. What you are saying is that this was the cause of the hospitalization.

Dr. CLUFF. That is right. This was the cause of the illness requiring hospitalization.

Senator NELSON. Do you have any judgment about how much of that would be avoidable?

Dr. CLUFF. That is asking for a value judgment. I would put it this way, Senator Nelson. I think that some of these reactions undoubtedly are due to excessive drug use. Some of it is due to excessive drug use by patients of over-the-counter preparations. Some of it I suspect is due to the excessive and indiscriminate use of drugs by physicians.

However, I think that it is very important to point out that illnesses due to drugs probably will never be completely abated, and the point here is it is not so much elimination of the problem as it is reduction of the significance and severity.

I think there is no question but that some of the reactions occurring in patients requiring hospitalization are probably unavoidable, with the present knowledge that we have. But I think some of them are probably avoidable, illustrated by the two examples that I cited to you previously.

Senator NELSON. In your studies did you get a statistical breakdown of, for example, how many of these patients who were admitted, experienced a second or a third reaction to a drug? In other words a circumstance such as the one you mentioned earlier?

Dr. CLUFF. Yes.

Senator NELSON. Where the patient knew or the doctor knew or both knew that the patient had had a reaction before, and for one reason or another the drug was administered again?

Dr. CLUFF. Well, I have cited two examples where this occurred. I don't think there is any question but that in some instances the administration of digitalis preparations, this is a drug necessary in many instances for the treatment of heart failure. In the administration of this drug commonly the physician feels that he can't obtain effective therapeutic action of the drug without increasing the dosage of the drug to the point of toxicity. He may then reduce the dosage of the drug.

But subsequently the patient's heart failure may increase, and the physician may then correspondingly increase the dosage of digitalis again to reintroduce the problem of intoxication. I think there are certain instances where this undoubtedly occurs.

On the other hand, the question you are asking is relevant circumstances where the physician knew the patient had trouble with the drug on one occasion and then readministered it to the patient again. The physician may occasionally knowingly do this.

For example, there have been many reports in the literature and many physicians have had such experiences. A patient, for example, may have had a serious problem with allergic reaction to penicillin.