

patient can go to sleep at that time. Now generally my sleeping habits are such that I don't go to bed until 12:30 at night, and in the hospital I find it very difficult to go to sleep before 12:30 anyhow. I think it is a little disconcerting to have the physician order a sedative that the nurse can administer at 10 o'clock at night when indeed I don't feel like going to sleep until 12:30. In essence I think this is a manifestation of indiscriminate prescribing.

In addition, another illustration of this would be the common habits of physicians in hospitals to order laxatives, what they call PRN—if necessary. And indeed this leaves the decision as to whether or not the patient should get a laxative up to the nurse. Now the nurse generally walks around the wards every day and asks the patients if they have had a bowel movement.

Now many nurses feel that it is absolutely necessary that every patient have a bowel movement once a day, but it is not uncommon at all to find some patients in the hospital whose natural habits are to have a bowel movement every 3 days. But, because the nurse feels that it is important that they have a bowel movement every day while they are in the hospital, they are forced to have one by being given a laxative every night. So that in essence I think this is again excessive use of medication.

Sedatives I think are equally overused. It is common when patients are in the hospital for them to be disturbed, particularly if they are elderly. Many patients admitted to the hospital are frightened and anxious, and in order to maintain quiet in the wards, the physician may administer sedatives and tranquilizers to the patient merely to maintain adequate comfort for the environment of the ward, when indeed there are many other ways in which the patient's anxiety and fear could be allayed without the administration of drugs.

In addition to that, I think that the use of antimicrobial drugs in the hospital is markedly excessive. As an illustration of this——

Senator NELSON. What kind of drugs?

Dr. CLUFF. Antibiotics. As an illustration of this, in the surveillance of the use of antibiotics at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in the months of December and January, it is not at all uncommon for 40 percent of the patients in the hospital to receive at least one antibiotic, and it is inconceivable to me, because one of my major interests is infection, to believe that 40 percent of the patients in the hospital require an antimicrobial drug, so that in this instance I think that there is no question but that these drugs are also used excessively.

It is not at all uncommon for a physician in practice to administer penicillin, for example, or any other antimicrobial drug to patients with viral respiratory disease when it is patently clear from the scientific literature this is absolutely of no value. So in essence I think it is perfectly obvious that drugs are used excessively by physicians.

In addition to that I think it is important to emphasize as I hope I pointed out before that the population as a whole, the public itself, seems to have the very distinct impression that you can cure almost any ill out of a tube, box, bottle or can and indeed it is very common for patients as I have indicated before to buy nonprescription drugs excessively in the drugstore, in order to treat whatever ill they happen to think they may have.