

mines what the physician finally prescribes. Of the 22 prednisones available here the doctor prescribes one that cost \$17.90 because that is the one that has been advertised successfully to him. The doctor is really unaware that the Medical Letter has said that all 22 are equivalent and that he ought to prescribe generically, particularly for his impecunious patients. I guess that means if they are rich it really does not make any difference if they pay a higher price, but doesn't it suggest to you that it is the advertising to the doctor that determines what he is going to prescribe, and not the quality of the drug, when you have a case right here of 22 drugs of equal quality? This is the puzzling thing that the committee is trying to get at. The smoke-screen is repeatedly thrown up in the literature that these drugs aren't equivalent. The fact of the matter is, if you look at the Medical Letter, you will find that the highest priced drugs here are not the purest. There are some that are not selling on the retail market very much although they are pure. You keep saying that purity is a factor. The fact is that they are within USP limits and whichever one you use really does not make any difference clinically. This is the issue that the committee is trying to get at and trying to get an explanation, without, if I may say so, very much success. Would you as a physician, if you read the Medical Letter and looked at their assertions about this, would you order the highest-priced one for your patient, unless you had some clinical evidence that one was better than the other?

Mr. BURROWS. That is a speculative question. I am not a physician, and I don't know what I would do if I were a physician other than to do what I thought was best for my patient, and if I thought, all things considered, that a drug at \$17.90 a 100 was the best thing for my patient, that is what I would prescribe.

Senator NELSON. I am sure you would, and so would I and so would anybody else. The real question here is that the—

Mr. BURROWS. I think possibly too that I would keep in mind as a physician and as someone that was interested in the future developments in the health care field—that I would be mindful of whether the company whose drugs I was prescribing, assuming other things being equal, was likely to contribute in the future something new and improved over what was available to me now versus another company which had elected not to indulge in that phase of the drug business.

Senator NELSON. Yes, but of the companies listed here—some I assume produce only generically—perhaps do not do any research. But Merck, one of the great corporations in the country, is listed here and is selling 100 tablets for \$2.20. Would you say that there would be any doubt in your mind as a physician about the quality of the product of Merck?

Mr. BURROWS. No, I would have no reservations about Merck as being a research-oriented house, certainly.

Senator NELSON. U.S. Vitamin Corp is selling prednisone at \$2.50. That is a research-oriented corporation, isn't it?

Mr. BURROWS. I presume it is.

Senator NELSON. There is the very distinguished company Upjohn which puts out Deltasone. That is one of the two drugs with the lowest amount of impurities in it and is selling for \$2.25 a 100. They are research-oriented are they not?