

Well, if presumably responsible publications or firms make this kind of statement, I think that all of us have to be assured more effectively than we have to date that USP or FDA or these other standards are, in fact, providing safe, secure, potent drugs.

Senator NELSON. Would you suppose that you could rephrase the statement you quoted and substitute a couple of words and come out the same, such as, even though two drugs meet USP standards, and each of them has a distinguished brand name, they may not be therapeutically equivalent?

Dr. CHERKASKY. This is apparently true, Senator Nelson, I think, as I said before, part of this is fiction. It is obvious there has been a campaign to throw question upon the efficacy of "generic drugs," and I think this must be laid to rest.

Senator NELSON. Of course, you are very well aware of the fact that many of the most distinguished drug manufacturers also make generic drugs. Do you suppose they are suggesting that the generic drugs made by major brand-name companies aren't as reliable as——

Dr. CHERKASKY. No.

Senator NELSON. Do you assume they are talking about generic drugs made by companies that aren't brand-name houses?

Dr. CHERKASKY. As you know, and previous testimony here has shown, that where we have examined the recalls, for example, that the brand-name houses have very serious faults. I believe that last year among some 15 citations, we had such distinguished names as Squibb & Abbott and Charles Pfizer, so that while I am concerned about being secure when we purchase a generic drug from a small company, that it will be what it purports to be, I must tell you that I feel quite insecure at the same time about the performance of some of the major drug companies in this country.

Senator NELSON. Did you happen to see the June 2 issue of the Medical Letter, volume 9, No. 11, issue 219, which is devoted to tests of prednisone tablets?

Dr. CHERKASKY. No; I did not see that, Senator.

Senator NELSON. The interesting thing about that to me was that they tested 22 prednisone products put out by 22 different companies, and found that they all met USP standards, and though there were variations, they were within the USP——

Dr. CHERKASKY. Limits.

Senator NELSON. And they state that:

There is nothing, however, either in reports of clinical trials or in the experience of Medical Letter consultants to suggest that the variations in formulation are causing any problems in the treatment of patients.

Then they go on to say:

The great price spread among tablets purchased from different pharmaceutical companies suggests the desirability of prescribing by generic name and specifying at least for patients of limited means that the prescriptions are filled with low priced prednisone tablets.

In the course of his testimony before this subcommittee, the president of the Schering Corp., stated that Meticorten, which sells for \$17.90 a 100 to the pharmacist, is better than other prednisone products, and obviously many doctors are convinced that it is better. However, the company has no clinical evidence to support its contention. And the variation in price is so dramatic that it is a matter of great sig-