take any drug and assert that they have done double-blind clinical testing and proved that different products are not therapeutically equivalent?

Dr. CHERKASKY. I haven't had the chance to look. I just read the first couple of pages on the way down here, Senator. I haven't had a chance to look through it so I can't answer that question.

Senator NELSON. I haven't been able thus far to find any place where the drug companies, who assert that their brand name is better, produce clinical evidence of it. Why do you suppose that is?

Dr. CHERKASKY. I would say it would be highly unlikely that they would be willing to undertake that kind of study. I think that sort of study has to be undertaken under other auspices for with all due reference to the great drug companies and the great names they have made they are self-serving. They have biased interests. I think the kind of testing you are talking about must clearly be done under auspices which are more devoted to the public interest than any proprietary drug company.

Senator NELSON. The president of the Schering Co. asserted that the proof that Meticorten is better is that doctors prescribe it.

I said:

Well, is your test the test of how many doctors prescribe it as to whether or not it is clinically better?

And he said:

Yes.

I said:

If the drug is really therapeutically more effective, wouldn't it be in your interest to contract with an independent scientific laboratory or contract with a hospital to do double-blind testing? Then when you had the evidence that it was better, you would have the whole market, because the medical profession wants to do the best it can do by its patients.

He said that he didn't think that such testing would be worthwhile.

Dr. CHERKASKY. I think he is right, but not for the reasons that he implies. It is almost like Alice in Wonderland. You know a drug has a chemical formula, and persumably if it is produced properly, to claim that because you put some "magical" different label on it that this then gives it other than some psychological appeal makes no sense. If these claims were true, the whole fundamental basis of our chemistry would be in question.

Senator NELSON. I know, and you probably reach the same conclusion, you did, in fact, make some reference to it earlier, that it is possible that in some of these drugs a different size crystal or something may cause a different therapeutic result. This could be true whether it is a brand name or generic name. But what strikes me as strange is why the major brand-name companies which have items selling in large amounts to the public would assert that their products are better without offering any clinical evidence. Can you explain why they don't?

Dr. CHERKASKY. Because I don't think that the testing would validate their statements, and I would say, Senator, I feel like I have been here before. We were talking about this same thing 5 or 6 years ago.

It is time that the Federal Government, which in my view has the prime responsibility for the protection of the health and security of