

If I could give you a parallel. One of the physicians who called into the library had a young woman who had cancer of the breast with multiple secondary cancers all around throughout her body. This physician wanted to know what the current status of the taking out of the adrenal glands was in the treatment of widely diffused cancer of the breast. This was his only question. One of the tapes that is in the library discusses the management of what is called secondary carcinomatosis, which is widespread cancer.

The man who made the tape made the specific comment that adrenalectomy, or the taking out of the adrenals was no longer acceptable treatment. This is all that doctor wanted to know from that tape. He got it within 5 minutes of his asking the question. He was really very enthusiastic about this.

In the same way with drugs, the doctor may well have only one problem in his mind about the drug—Will this drug affect the diabetic patient? It is our hope that the clinical pharmacologist would have included that in the tapes. If he doesn't, at least the physician knows who the recognized expert on that drug is and he can call him directly and say, "My patient has diabetes, you didn't say anything about diabetes. Can you give him this drug?"

Senator NELSON Thank you.

Dr. MEYER. I would like to describe perhaps in more detail—

Senator NELSON. Is there any source now available to the physician where he can get the kind of information authoritatively and quickly that you have spoken about?

Dr. MEYER. I think we are talking in relative terms. If we are talking in terms of hours or minutes, the answer is "No." If you are talking in terms of days or weeks the answer is "Yes." But there are publications which are well authenticated by which things are sent around to physicians. These are done by independent clinical pharmacologists and these are sent to subscribing physicians and they can find out about the particular drug.

Mr. GORDON. Which publications do you have in mind?

Dr. MEYER. The one that comes to mind is the Medical Letter that is authoritative and well-founded, and a lot of us rely on it to a great degree.

Senator NELSON. Does the Medical Letter have available all the information on the most frequently prescribed drugs?

Dr. MEYER. No, sir. They put out every month the Medical Letter, and they select drugs as they are evaluated by their experts that the physician, if he gets the letter—the Medical Letter—will presumably read it and file it for future reference. But there is always a timelag between the time that the evaluators had evaluated the drug and it arrives on the physician's desk.

Senator NELSON. Even so, that wouldn't meet the problem, would it, of the physician who had read the Medical Letter on a drug 4 months ago, and in the meantime clinicians had discovered that there were additional side effects from the drug? Can the pharmacologist revise his tape to say that "we found another side effect"? There is a lag there, too, is there not?

Dr. MEYER. There is a certain lag, except the pharmacologist can revise it relatively quickly; it becomes updated and again authoritative fairly quickly. It may be a matter of more months before the Medical Letter can get the revision published in the Journal.