

vitamins would be paying too much for something they don't need. We have to identify where vitamins can be used properly, and then, of course, you come to your question on price.

We would hope that we could resolve the first question as to the need for supplementation and the proper use of supplementation by vitamins, and then I think we would be in a position to deal with the second question of price.

Senator HATFIELD. But at the present time there is a distinct problem here in this price field of a variation, a wide variation, of vitamins available to the consumer at the drugstore.

Mr. STEEVES. That is correct.

Senator HATFIELD. And pharmacists are in a role of prescribing, if you can say it in a broad sense, because they are counseling the customers. The customer says, "Well, Mr. Brown, which one of these is the best vitamin?" Well, now, he can help that customer by selecting an equivalency that is less costly or he can push the brand name and make more in his markup, and so forth.

This is a problem.

Dr. APPLE. Well, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Hatfield, I would have to answer that there may have been a time, a decade or so ago, when the pharmacist could have participated in this kind of educational activity for the consumer, with the consumer, but in the case of vitamins, that day is gone because most vitamins are now being sold in other installations, in grocery stores, supermarkets, vending machines, and you name it. One of the largest sales promotions for vitamins is by the mail-order distributors.

Senator HATFIELD. But there are a goodly number of us who are still going to drugstores to buy our medicines and our vitamins and prescriptions.

Dr. APPLE. We are delighted to hear that, Senator.

Senator HATFIELD. Are you engaged, though, in an educational program within your profession?

Dr. APPLE. Yes. We have a program called a health education service in which we actually work with all voluntary health agencies and the agencies of the Federal Government accumulating literature for consumer education. These racks, containing educational pamphlets on many subjects, are being, and have been, placed in pharmacies for a number of years.

We also have, as I have indicated later in our testimony, prepared educational material for the pharmacist on nonprescription drugs.

Our first "Handbook of Non-Prescription Drugs" does not cover the subject of vitamins. I think I would agree with the Senator that our profession has a public responsibility in this area.

Senator HATFIELD. And we are shocked at prednisone today, as an example you cite here. But I think we could be shocked, also, at some of the price differentials within the vitamin field and the kind of relationship of seller to customer as it relates in that field as, by the analogy we are now drawing, of the relationship of prescriber to patient. I am just as concerned that we move in every way possible to help protect the consumer, and that we raise these questions and these examples which I think are properly raised by you this morning.