

But, also, I think we ought to be making certain that your association is doing everything it can to have completely clean hands on this whole problem of the consumer and his well being.

Mr. GROSSMAN. Dr. Apple, may I ask you a question, too, in the same light?

In other words, following Senator Hatfield's line of questioning, why, in other words, are you any better than a doctor who prescribes a brand-name drug, when I can go into your drugstore and the pharmacist puts out in front of me a brand-name vitamin, what is the difference? In other words, the industry—

Dr. APPLE. I think you have to draw a basic distinction between prescription drugs in which the consumer does not have a say—and I have indicated that further on in our testimony—and other consumer goods, such as vitamins, which are legally available without a third party's order and the consumer is free to choose. The same application can be made to tires as well as to vitamins.

The consumer needs more information to be an intelligent purchasing agent for himself. He needs the best advice he can get. But in the case of prescription drugs the consumer is not in this picture.

Mr. GROSSMAN. I just wonder who can better provide him with that information than the pharmacist when he comes in. I frankly don't see the distinction.

Mr. STEEVES. This is true, that the pharmacist can provide him counsel, except it is the patient in this particular case that makes the final decision. Also, you have to recognize that some of the same problems are involved in the vitamin field that are involved in the area of prescription drugs the subcommittee is investigating.

Some pharmacists believe, and I don't think this has been investigated publicly, that the brand-name vitamin, even though it may sell at two or three times the price or at double the price, or whatever the premium may be, is actually the best thing for the patient. That the other vitamin may be subpotent or poorer quality—some of the same issues you are facing with prescription drugs. Perhaps resolution of the issue as to prescription drugs on this therapeutic equivalence will be of some help to the pharmacist in the—

Mr. GROSSMAN. I want to make it clear I am not intending to defend anyone, but I am wondering, you say the industry should take the lead, and I see the same point here so far as you are concerned.

Dr. APPLE. I am happy to answer the question now. One of my staff just told me that a vitamin chapter will be published in the February issue of our journal. The delay was in waiting for clarification of the Food and Drug Administration on proposed regulations.

Mr. GROSSMAN. Thank you.

Senator HATFIELD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator NELSON. Just so the record is clear on this: A few moments ago Senator Hatfield referred to the question of the consumer not having enough information.

I am sure he agrees with me that in order to insure that nobody will be misled, it is really the doctor and the pharmacist who need the information.

So far as I am concerned, and I am sure the committee will agree, the discretion to make the decision about prescribing drugs of a brand