

Senator NELSON. To the best of my memory, we have not had any witness who said that doctors should be allowed to prescribe only by generic name. We have had some distinguished pharmacologists and doctors who have said that it is much better medical practice to prescribe by generic name, and then if the doctor wishes, to name the brand he wants—whether it is prednisone, Schering, or prednisone, Lilly, or predisone, Wolins, or predisone something else. It is a much better way to practice medicine. But our witnesses did not testify that the doctor ought to be deprived of his right to name the company where the generic name drug is manufactured.

Mr. STETLER. That is my recollection.

In a true generic prescription, the physician delegates to a pharmacist or nurse the selection of the manufacturing source for the product prescribed.

Senator NELSON. The suggestion that generic prescribing delegates to the nurse is new to me.

Mr. STETLER. In some situations, in some areas, the nurses have some authority that would extend into the prescription drug field. This is obviously not to the degree with nurses as it is with pharmacists. The predominant situation would be that delegation of authority goes to the pharmacist.

Senator NELSON. I have never heard of this kind of responsibility being given to a nurse. That is why I raised the question. Are you referring perhaps to a situation in which a nurse may be practicing in a hospital which has a formulary?

Mr. STETLER. No, I am not trying to make a big point of this. I am not thinking of a nurse in the situation, where the hospital has a formulary. That would normally be the decision of the hospital pharmacist.

Senator NELSON. You agree that whenever a hospital establishes a formulary, you do deprive, for all practical purposes, the doctor's right to prescribe entirely as he sees fit.

Now, in all formulary situations that I am aware of, the formulary committee and the hospital administration says, "Well, if the doctor really wants to prescribe this brand name, he can come to us, and he may be authorized to do so." But as a matter of practice, what you have done is agreed by an evaluation of the drugs through the formulary committee that this will be the formulary for the hospital, and maybe 99 percent or more of the prescriptions written by the doctors are written according to that formulary, and it is only the rare exception, when a doctor says "I want to prescribe this brand name." Isn't that correct?

Mr. STETLER. That is true.

Of course, with respect to a formulary—the word covers a large area. There are all types of formularies, even at the hospital level.

I think the important thing to remember in connection with the formulary is that most of them operate at the local or the hospital level, and the decision is as to the drugs included on the formulary is made by a therapeutics committee, probably consisting of the doctors who practice on that staff, and the administrator, and the hospital pharmacist, that you have got a pretty good formulary in terms of the practices of the men that are going to be governed by it.