

Mr. CUTLER. No, Mr. Chairman. In every one of those formularies from the Department of Defense on down, the hospital or procuring agent does not just say, "Give me prednisone, any old prednisone."

Senator NELSON. Nobody ever says, "Give me any old prednisone," certainly.

Mr. CUTLER. But in this committee, you are advocating that a doctor say on his prescription any old prednisone.

Senator NELSON. When did this committee say that?

Mr. CUTLER. Has not the thrust of this committee been that there should be generic prescribing?

Senator NELSON. I think you ought to read the testimony.

Mr. CUTLER. I have, sir.

Senator NELSON. Then you have not read it carefully. I have never said at any time, nor has anybody on this committee recommended, that a doctor prescribe any old prednisone. That is nonsense and you know it. We suggest that physicians ought to prescribe drugs of high quality. We suggest a doctor ought to prescribe by generic name and, if they want a brand name, that they should name the brand in addition.

The doctors who testified here have said one of the problems involved here is the confusion caused by prescribing by trade name and not putting the generic name on the label. We had testimony by a very distinguished doctor here on thalidomide who said that deformed children were born because of this poor method of prescribing. You know this is true.

Nobody suggests prescribing any prednisone. But I would suggest to you that the Medical Letter tested 22 prednisones. One of them is Schering's at \$17.90. One of them is Merck's at \$2.20. One of them sells at 59 cents. Another at 75 cents. The Medical Letter said they are all equivalent.

Mr. CUTLER. They said there was no proof that they are not equivalent.

Senator NELSON. That is correct.

Mr. CUTLER. Which is a double negative.

Senator NELSON. Do you have any proof they are not equivalent?

Mr. CUTLER. I do not; but you cannot prove a positive by a double negative.

Senator NELSON. If you were a doctor in a hospital, looking at the medical aspects of prescribing, looking at the cost of running a hospital, on what method would you make the decision that you would use a drug that costs \$17.90 versus Merck's \$2.20 tablet?

Mr. CUTLER. If I were satisfied there were two products that were therapeutically substantially equivalent, I would prescribe the cheaper one.

Senator NELSON. How would you satisfy yourself on that?

Mr. CUTLER. I am a lawyer, but doctors, I understand, do it on the basis of their experience. When there are hospital formularies or