

KOUNTZE, TEX., April 3, 1961.

EDGAR F. ELFSTROM,  
Daily News Tribune,  
Fullerton, Calif.

DEAR MR. ELFSTROM: Senator Estes Kefauver has suggested I write you concerning the following matter, with which I gather from his letter, you are already tragically familiar.

In Feb. 1961, my 7½ year old son died from aplastic anemia due in the opinion of the 5 specialists, including the State's outstanding hematologist, who attended him, to the routine administration and dosage of Parke Davis' Chloromycetin (Chloramphenicol) by me for an ear-throat infection *on the advice* of representatives of Parke-Davis who repeatedly assured me of its safety, and urged its use, *routinely*, in general practice.

Almost simultaneously, there were 2 other deaths in this area, a child and an adult which appear to be attributable to the same cause.

I am contemplating legal action against Parke Davis Co.; please advise me of your experience in this matter and how we who have had this terrible result in common may cooperate to the best interests of medicine and humanity.

Respectfully,

H. A. Hooks, M.D.

Senator NELSON. Dr. Watkins.

**STATEMENT OF DR. ALBE M. WATKINS, LA CANADA MEDICAL CENTER, LA CANADA, CALIF.**

Dr. WATKINS. As Mr. Elfstrom has already stated, I, too, am greatly honored that you have accorded me, a California country doctor, this privilege of speaking before this august body.

Practicing physicians are directly influenced by representatives of pharmaceutical companies or by journal advertisements to the extent I would estimate of 75 to 80 percent of their prescriptions. The remaining 20 to 25 percent may be influenced by medical school or medical association lectures—many representatives of the former may be working on grants from these large pharmaceutical companies.

With reference to Chloromycetin (chloramphenicol), Parke, Davis in the early years completely omitted any report of toxicity for at least 16 to 18 months. This complete disregard of basic morality was directly responsible for my son's death. Later when forced to mention possible reactions they played down any such reports or insisted, as they did at conventions of AMA, that there was not any proof of the drug Chloromycetin causing death. They insisted other medications had been taken concurrently as iron, aspirin, etc., for a long time.

This drug was given me by a representative of Parke, Davis. And I have made it a habit when they come in to extol the virtue of the drug to ask them about the reactions first. And this man told me there were no reactions, this was a perfectly safe antibiotic. So I took the drug home and placed it in my medicine cabinet.

A few days later my son suffered a urinary tract infection, and I went to the cabinet and I looked at the drugs I had. I picked up a bottle of sulfa, and I said, I don't want to give him this, because this might depress his blood-making system, his hemopoietic system. Imagine that. And I looked at Auromycin and Terramycin, and I said, sometimes this upsets the stomach, and I don't want him to get sick with the drug.

And then I spotted the Chloromycetin. And I gave him the Chloromycetin, which caused his death several months later.