

Senator NELSON. I don't exactly follow that. I assume when they say "widely prescribed drugs" they meant prednisone, not Meticorten, Paracort, or other trade name.

Dr. SILVERMAN. Specifically, the low-cost generic-named drug is not in fact widely prescribed.

Senator NELSON. I wasn't thinking of it in those terms. I hadn't thought they were. I thought if you were going to list the drug, prednisone, you would list prednisone and you would list all those who produced prednisone whether it is generic or brand name, not just the company that is selling most of it.

Dr. LEE. That would be the approach that we think would be essential for the compendium. And, of course, really the crux of the resistance to the compendium is that it would be based on the generic name and not on the brand name of the product. The compendium would list drugs primarily by generic name, but also would list manufacturers and the trade name of the product. The organization of the volume would be on the generic rather than on the trade name.

Senator NELSON. I had assumed that there wasn't any dispute about that. Maybe I was in error. Obviously, in the case one was examining in some detail here, prednisone, the range, according to the Medical Letter, 59 cents to \$17.90 a hundred, and their panels of physicians and consultants on the chemical evaluation of the drugs reached the conclusion that they are all equivalents.

So, if you only listed the brand which sold the most, you would be listing Meticorten and you wouldn't be listing Merck or Lannett or American Pharmacal that were running at prices of 80 cents, a dollar, \$2.20. But I have been amazed at the number of doctors I have talked to, when I discussed the price in the article in the Medical Letter, who had been prescribing Meticorten for patients that it was in the marketplace not at \$17.90 a hundred but in the marketplace at 59 cents a hundred. And they have no way of getting the information.

So if you had a compendium, you would know that these others are available in the market.

Dr. LEE. It is essential that adequate price information be available. In most cases this would be relative price information. This is part of the effort to provide physicians with accurate and adequate information.

Senator NELSON. And you are satisfied that you could list them all in the compendium, and obviously supply adequate, objective, detailed, scientific information about the drug?

Dr. LEE. Absolutely; yes.

Senator NELSON. How many drugs would that involve in the compendium?

Dr. LEE. How many drugs would be in the compendium?

Senator NELSON. I don't mean how many brands or generic names, I mean how many different compounds?

Dr. SILVERMAN. About 1,200 distinct drug entities, but the number of products would be perhaps in the tens of thousands.

Dr. LEE. Because of the different companies.

Mr. GORDON. Dr. Lee, you have talked about the most widely prescribed drugs. Are these necessarily the most useful drugs?