Dr. NOVITCH. Mr. Chairman, this chart, published, I believed, in 1967, compares the prices of various analgesics and antipyretics—drugs for pain and fever. At the top is simple aspirin. It shows the cost of 25 tablets to National Health Service to be about 30 cents in U.S. currency.

Others are listed in the ascending order of cost. At the bottom, the most expensive is a combination product containing aspirin and meprobamate. And it sells for about 96 cents in U.S. currency. Others are single active agents selling for almost the maximum price listed.

The impression which the Ministry seeks to convey to practitioners is that—this comes along with the Prescribers Journal—some of the standard preparations are quite effective and available at less cost than some of the more expensive products on the market.

Senator NELSON. Thank you.

Dr. LEE. It it a matter of communicating really relative costs in a very simple direct fashion, and I think quite an effective fashion.

To return to my statement——

Mr. GORDON. May I ask a question, Dr. Lee?

Since that seems to be a rather simple type of publication, and it probably wouldn't be too expensive to publish it, why can't the Department of HEW publish it under its existing authority? Specifically, I have in mind section 705 of United States Code 21, where the Secretary may cause to be disseminated information regarding food, drugs, devices, and so on and so forth, dealing with the health and welfare of the people.

Dr. LEE. Several things. One is, I think that such a publication by a Government agency might be less acceptable to the medical profession than a non-Government publication even though the same people wrote the articles.

Second, if we were to undertake such a publication—it is an important part of our recommendation—and if the decision was made to do so, we would certainly want it thoroughly discussed before Congress as to whether it should be a Government or non-Government publication. I think that kind of issue should be thoroughly aired before the Congress because I think you would want to hear the alternatives, the costs of alternatives, and their likely acceptance before a final judgment was made.

Mr. GROSSMAN. Doctor, may I ask you a question with regard to equivalency? Could you tell me how many drugs you tested to date in making a determination?

Dr. LEE. How many drugs we have tested in the Food and Drug Administration and the Public Health hospitals?

Mr. GROSSMAN. Yes.

Dr. LEE. Dr. Novitch.

Dr. NOVITCH. The present Food and Drug Administration tests are concerned mainly with antibiotics. A total of 44 products—that is, representing all manufacturers—are under test now. The exact number of drug entities involved is less than a dozen. Two drugs are under study in Public Health Service hospitals.

Mr. GROSSMAN. Do you anticipate that more drugs will be tested?

Dr. NOVITCH. Yes. We have not only recommended that the tests continue, but that Federal funds be expanded.