

surveys estimated the average was between \$3.26 and \$3.59.

A special study conducted for the Task Force showed that the average prescription cost for the elderly in 1966 was even higher--\$3.91.

Distribution of Drug Expenditures

If drug use were equally distributed among all groups--that is, 4 to 5 prescriptions per year at a cost of \$3 to \$4--there would be no major problem for the elderly. But this is far from the actual situation.

Although the elderly represent slightly less than 10 percent of the total population, they account for about 23 percent of all prescription drug expenditures.

A nationwide study by the National Center for Health Statistics in fiscal year 1965 showed the following (see Table 1):

- The average number of acquisitions--i.e., the number of prescriptions or refills--for the elderly was more than twice that for the total population, and nearly three times that for those under 65.
- The average number of acquisitions for elderly women was nearly 50 percent more than the number for men.