

【These are some of the techniques used in this travesty of medical education. While not all drug advertising and promotion is of this type, too much of it is. Some is educational but there is ample evidence to indicate that the industry is only too ready to depart from its self-professed role of the Knight in Shining Armor totally dedicated to Science and the Healing Arts. These practices and others more vicious such as the subtle persuasion to use indiscriminately drugs (such as chloramphenicol) which are dangerously toxic and indicated only in selected desperately sick patients suggest that dedication is primarily to profit, even at the expense of good medical care.】

While the industry's practices and policies in advertising and promotion are necessarily exposed for examination, this is not true in most other areas. Here the camouflage of euphemisms and self-proclaimed virtue is not so easy to penetrate. Research is a good example.

While the industry spokesmen would have us believe that all research is on wonder drugs or better medicinal products this is no more true than the euphemism of post-graduate medical education. They stress that there are many failures for each successful drug. This is true since it is the very essence of research. The problem arises out of the fact that they market so many of their failures. Between these failures which are presented as new drugs and the useless modifications of old drugs (the addition of zinc to vitamins is a good example) most of the research results in a treadmill which moves at a rapid pace but goes nowhere. Since so much depends on novelty, drugs change like women's hemlines and rapid obsolescence is simply a sign of motion, not progress as the apologists would have us believe.

There is an interesting relationship between research and advertising and promotion. In many companies there is considerable antagonism since the advertising people feel, with justification, that they are expected to do what research cannot. The perennial cry is "if research would give us a good drug we could turn out a really good promotion program". Actually they do remarkably well with what they get. Lacking facts which are convincing they invent fictions which are confusing.

I am only slightly amused by the breast beating, statistics juggling, and comparisons with the research costs of other industries. Even the statistics are suspect since I wonder how many cigarette companies charge the cost of paid testimonials to research rather than advertising. I doubt that there are many other industries in which research is so free of risks. Most must depend on selling only their successes. If an automobile does not have a motor no amount of advertising can make it appear to have one. On the other hand, with a little luck, proper timing, and a good promotion program a bag of asafetida with a unique chemical side-chain can be made to look like a wonder drug. The illusion may not last, but it frequently lasts long enough. By the time the doctor learns what the company knew at the beginning it has two new products to take the place of the old one. This, too, is well recognized and in some companies calls for casuistry of a high order. In others it is simply called a "business decision". While I doubt that it actually does, with this advantage, the pharmaceutical industry can well afford to spend more on "research".

For those who are interested in comparisons I would suggest examination, not of prices, but of the advertising and promotion of identical products by the same company in its domestic and foreign markets. This will probably reveal the rather remarkable fact that the efficacy of some drugs varies according to the position of the Rio Grande.

Now I am more aware than most of the worthwhile contributions of the industry, especially since it was my privilege to play a small part in some of them. I have no wish to minimize them, nor to deny the apologists their right to exaggerate them. To imply, however, that these contributions make up the total, or even the major effort in research, or in other endeavors, is gross distortion.

At this point let me remind you of an old French proverb which states "There are more buyers than sellers". The victim of exploitation is a victim only because in being exploited he serves some purpose of his own. A brief examination of the other side of the coin gives a better understanding of the nature and scope of the problem.

The physician is human and his medical degree does not change this. Since he likes to believe that he helps his patients the wish fulfilling phantasy of the