

that illustrates the problem. A patient was hospitalized in order to achieve a therapeutic blood level by a particular drug. Upon discharge, the patient was given a prescription for the drug and instructed on how to take the medication. The patient presented the prescription at the pharmacy and received the generic drug of the brand name product he received while in the hospital. A week later the patient returned to see the doctor. The patient stated he had not taken the prescription medication because it was different from the medication he received as a patient in the hospital. The patient had to be readmitted to the hospital and treatment was started all over again. It is quite obvious that there can be fatal consequences with interference to the physician-patient relationship.

Senator NELSON. Let me ask a question. That is one example. Now suppose a patient had been admitted to the hospital and had been getting a generic drug. He comes out of the hospital and the doctor prescribes a brand name drug. He goes to the pharmacy and sees the brand name drug as a little yellow one instead of a little red one. He refuses to take it. He has to go back to the hospital. What are you proving? In one case, it was a brand name he got in the hospital and rejected the generic. In the other case, he got out and refused to take the brand name. What are you proving? That the brand name is better than the generic?

Dr. ALFANO. I don't believe the practice is as you stated. The physician doesn't change medication on the patient that way. A physician will use medication and carry it on to the point where if that medication is not working any more, he will change the prescription and order a new medication.

Senator NELSON. Are you saying in this case at the hospital, the doctor prescribed the brand name and the pharmacist illegally substituted the generic name?

Dr. ALFANO. No, this is a system here. They have both brand name and generic drugs. While in the hospital, evidently, the brand name was used and at the pharmacy, the generic drug was dispensed. It could be the other way around.

Senator NELSON. Of course. But what does it prove?

Dr. ALFANO. It proves that you must have consistency as far as the medication. A patient gets confused. I have seen it happen.

Have you ever gotten medication, you get one type of medication, it is for a certain condition, and you go to a pharmacy and you have a different type of medication and it is foreign to you, that you do not question it? Do you feel, well, it is a different color and must be the same? It is irrational to say it is the same.

Senator NELSON. I assume you could have some instances on six or seven drugs and they switch. But you are using the case where the patient goes to the hospital and is taken care of in that hospital by the specialists, goes on back to a local physician in another city. The doctor there knows he is supposed to get prednisone, so he writes a brand name that he likes. It is not generic. So the patient's confidence is shattered again.

Dr. ALFANO. No, no, it isn't. It is understood. This is the patient-physician relationship that exists. There is no disturbance there. I write a prescription for a patient, tell the patient, you take it. They fill that prescription. You are talking about another doctor's prescription?