

The drug not taken often results in a greater tragedy than the drug that is prescribed could cause.

Senator NELSON. There are statistics available that I do not have here on the number of patients in hospitals who are there for drug reactions——

Dr. ANNIS. No question about it.

Senator NELSON. (continuing). From drugs that were not indicated. They should not have had the drugs. This is what we are talking about as just one item in the whole picture. The reason I have taken chloramphenicol is that it is a very dramatic case that has persisted for 15 years without the medical profession successfully convincing the physicians, and there must be a lot of them, because estimates are that some 4 million people received the drug in 1967.

Dr. ANNIS. Its life history is very short alongside of morphine and other opiates. Neither the medical profession of the world nor the legal and law enforcement agencies of the world have been able to control them very well, either. This does not mean that they do not continue to try and continue their efforts.

Senator NELSON. I do not know whether that is overprescribed or not.

Dr. ANNIS. Let us say it is overused.

Senator NELSON. That is not the issue we are on here. We are on the issue that has lasted for 15 years.

Dr. ANNIS. Oh, yes, that is part of the issue. A lot of these drug reaction cases are drugs that are purchased over the counter. Probably 40 or 50 percent of all drugs are purchased over the counter. Reactions come from these just as much as from the prescribed drugs.

Senator NELSON. Some day we intend to have hearings on over-the-counter drugs. But we are at this moment on prescription drugs. What I am saying is, reviewing what we have had in testimony for over a year, this a dramatic case of the medical profession failing its responsibility over a 15-year period, and I am wondering how much longer it would have gone on if we had not had the dramatic testimony we had a year ago, before this committee.

Then that raises the question whether the profession is derelict in its responsibility here. I would say yes. I do not know what you would say.

Dr. ANNIS. I would say that is a matter of opinion. What you are saying is that the educational efforts of the organized profession to use its regular channels of communication have been unsuccessful in dissuading some members of the profession from the use of a drug when other drugs could perhaps have been better and more safely used. This is a question of the failure of education.

Again I come back to alcohol and the failure of education. Here is another drug that has many good and profitable uses as a drug. It has uses in other areas in our social structure. Yet here again, although we have all been educated that it, like most other drugs, if abused, can result in troubles, we have failed to get that total story to physicians, to lawyers, to lawmakers, the people at home that vote for them, and to our patients. This does not indicate a failure on the part of someone to try to tell the story, but rather a failure, as I indicated this morning, on the part of the message recipient. What is true in one area is equally true in another as long as we continue to be humans and fallible.