

politics, on a very local level, I have come to know that sometimes you give more notoriety than it had when it was read the first time.

I am not quite sure, Senator, that it would be appropriate, in all instances certainly, to place in large prominence full-page ads with respect to some omission or some mistake that was made in the ad, as subsequently determined by the FDA.

However, you have a point there and I think we can review our present policy with respect to that point, and see if we should be doing something more.

But I wish the committee would keep in mind that we are speaking here of perhaps an omission which may be only one statement among a number of statements that were included.

Perhaps it took the FDA a couple of weeks to review that ad. The manufacturer may have been required to come in and discuss the problem, and then reach an agreement as to what should be done with respect to the way the ad was worded, and how it was in conflict with the statement made in the package insert.

And after all this is done, finally, it is agreed, perhaps in this one instance, that a "Dear Doctor" letter should go out to the physicians across the country—all of that. Then the question is, should the AMA in a large-page ad also say, "there is one other statement that should have been made here!" We cannot see that, but perhaps something should be done and, again, we shall take this under consideration, perhaps to improve our communication on this point.

Senator NELSON. Well, this is part of the whole context in which these hearings have been conducted, part of it, about the tremendous influence of the drug industry in promoting the sale of drugs. It seems to me that the AMA's journal is not an ordinary publication, and that when a false claim is made that can and will mislead the doctor to improperly prescribe for his patients, there is a moral obligation of JAMA to say right off the bat—and if every medical publication did that every time it happened, you will see some more honest advertising.

But if every time something like that happens, the publishers who receive the ads say nothing about it, why should they reform?

Mr. HARRISON. I think they are seriously hurt by these "Dear Doctor" letters, seriously hurt, because here is a communication that, in effect, again goes to every single physician and which states that they have done something in error and done something improperly. And I think this seriously affects them.

So I think there is a very pertinent and powerful restraining influence here.

Senator NELSON. You are saying after all this discussion that you do not think that the American Medical Association has an obligation to correct misleading advertising in its journal. Is that the conclusion?

Mr. HARRISON. We are not saying that at all, Senator. I think I have made the point that certainly we will look at this again, but the question is whether you use a sledgehammer here to kill a flea. We would have to look at the particular statement that was made, the context in which it was made, the advertising, and I would say to you that on the basis of what has been related here and more recently through the committee, we would have to evaluate again the procedures involved and perhaps effect some change.