

Senator NELSON. May I interrupt a moment, Doctor? If the brand name is the only drug that the drugstore has stocked, because that is the name the doctor is prescribing most frequently, then when the pharmacist receives a prescription using the generic name, he can substitute any brand name he wishes. Therefore, in the AMA study, the patients probably got the same drugs, whether they were prescribed by the brand or generic name. And many drugs that are cheaper may not be stocked at all simply because the doctor is prescribing them by brand name, and under the law in some 40-odd States a pharmacist cannot substitute another brand or another generic name. So the test that was used by the AMA in my judgment was not a fair test of the issue. The fact that the drug was ordered by generic name didn't mean that it was supplied on that basis.

Dr. POLLARD. I have not any great comment on that.

Senator NELSON. I might add that a year ago the Peoples Drug Stores and the Gray's Drug Chain, one out in Ohio and the other here, announced that they were going to stock a line of generic drugs manufactured by Strong, Cobb & Arner, and that in their public statements the price of the generic would average one-half of the brand name, which I think is a pretty convincing case to demonstrate that you could get a lower price from the generic. And Strong, Cobb & Arner, of course, is a very distinguished generic manufacturer.

Dr. POLLARD. Well, I am impressed with that statement.

Senator NELSON. Please continue.

Dr. POLLARD. We are told by pharmacologists that equivalency is sometimes variable merely by the physical methods of drug preparations. In some hospitals, where it is possible to have a committee of physicians review all drugs, purchasing drugs by generic titles can save considerable sums of money. Physicians sometimes prefer to order certain drugs by trade name merely because they can identify the various pills they have prescribed for a patient who might call by telephone to ask question about his medication. Most physicians really believe they can be more confident their patients will get reliable, consistently potent drugs if they prescribe products made by firms in which they have confidence.

Senator NELSON. Why do doctors believe that?

Dr. POLLARD. I think in most instances they believe it because of past experience.

Senator NELSON. What experience could they have had that would indicate otherwise? Most of them prescribe brand names anyway. How would they get the experience? Wouldn't the experience be testimonial?

Dr. POLLARD. Sometimes when a drug house comes out with a drug product in the beginning they look upon that as being a dependable drug, as with any new product that comes on the market. And I am afraid that they then get into the habit of prescribing that drug because they have learned how to use it and depend upon it.

Senator NELSON. But your statement is that physicians believe that they can be more confident that their patients will get reliable, consistently potent drugs if they prescribe products made by firms in which they have confidence. I do not quarrel with your statement. I think that is probably what they do believe. But my question is, What scientific foundation is that belief based on?

Dr. POLLARD. It is just based on their past experience.