

Mr. GORDON. Dr. Hewitt—and this will be for Dr. Wise and Dr. Kunin too—would it be fair to say that many people have been injured through the use of these fixed combination drugs?

Dr. HEWITT. Yes, I think that is a fair statement.

Dr. KUNIN. Yes.

Dr. HEWITT. I think many of the injuries may not be of the obvious sort, such as with chloramphenicol. But I think the evidence is clear that in the case of streptomycin damage—well, let's say, in some instances it is as clear as the case of chloramphenicol. For example, occasionally instances of dramatic streptomycin toxicity after a few doses of the penicillin-streptomycin combination have been noted. And occasionally, instances say of very florid skin rashes and jaundice have been observed following the administration of novobiocin. But I think that more important that these are the possible countless instances of streptomycin toxicity which may not be obvious.

We know that the dose of streptomycin, the toxicity is additive, and that probably as we administer this material it may do damage to the hair cells in the ear which may not be entirely obvious. And this is the sort of thing, I think, that is the most important thing to try to prevent, in other words, the unobvious instances of toxicity which nevertheless are very likely to occur.

Senator NELSON. I take it—just for the purposes of keeping the record clear—that the answer to counsel's question, have people been injured by the use of these combinations, is the word "unnecessarily," because it was not necessary to use the combinations which you are referring to, is that correct?

Dr. HEWITT. Yes.

Dr. KUNIN. There is no question that this is correct. I would emphasize not only the individual injury, but injury to all of society, not only the individual who received the drug. Because their widespread use have induced the spread of resistant organisms. So that instead of medical practice being simple it is much more complicated now, and many more expensive drugs have to be used because of this widespread practice.

Dr. WISE. I would add that because of implication of broad spectrum that there is a tendency to use them without establishing the etiologic diagnosis, and then interfering with the diagnosis of the infection, placing the patient in a state of therapeutic dilemma, in which only empiricism could then be followed rather than the choice, which could also be considered a hazard.

Senator NELSON. There is another general question that any or all of you may wish to comment on. We have had testimony from a number of distinguished witnesses, pharmacologists, clinicians, on the vast array of drugs under innumerable brand names, making it impossible for any one person to keep track. We might have one compound that has 25 or 30 brand names.

In addition to the panels' conclusions about the lack of efficacy and the hazards of the combinations, there is the problem created by putting together all kinds of various combinations of antibiotics or any other combinations which makes it impossible for a physician to really manage to keep up to date on what they all mean and how they all ought to be used.