

Dr. LEVINE. The left bar in each case refers to the percentage of all new prescriptions accounted for by the class, and the right bar shows the percent of new and refill prescriptions—that is, total prescriptions—for the class. In that year there were 54.1 new prescriptions for psychotropic drugs filled for every 100 of adult population.

Senator NELSON. What was that figure?

Dr. LEVINE. 54.1 new prescriptions for psychotropic drugs filled for every 100 of the adult population. The analogous figure for total psychotropic drug prescriptions, both new and refill, was 133.1. It should be pointed out that these acquisitions are obviously not equally distributed per person, meaning that 1.33 prescriptions were not given to every individual adult, but some individuals got many more than 1.33 prescriptions.

From this chart it is clear that the minor tranquilizers and hypnotic drugs are the classes acquired most frequently.

Let us now turn our attention to trends in drug acquisitions over the past 10 years.

Between 1958 and 1967 the number of new psychotropic drug prescriptions filled in U.S. drugstores rose from 42.7 million to 70.6 million, an increase of 65 percent. During that same period, new prescriptions for all other drugs increased by 35 percent. However, it should be pointed out that a marked increase in new psychotropic drug prescriptions observable in 1966 is largely artifactual, due to the passage of the Drug Abuse Control Amendments of 1965. These amendments set limitations on the number of refills for sedative, stimulant, and hypnotic drugs and this resulted in a sharp increase in new prescriptions. This was so because you could not give more than five refills on any one prescription and your prescription totally could not extend more than 6 months, and, therefore, more new prescriptions would be written.

From 1958 to 1965, in the 8-year period preceding the legislation, the rate of increase for new psychotropic drug prescriptions was 31 percent as opposed to 21 percent for all other drugs.

Because of the passage of the Drug Abuse Control Amendments of 1965, current trends for psychotropic drugs are better represented by the combined total for new and refill prescriptions. Between 1964 and 1967, the years for which we have data available, the total number of psychotropic prescriptions filled increased by 16 percent, from 149.1 to 173.6 million; while those for all other drugs rose by 26 percent. Thus, in recent years, prescriptions for psychotropic drugs have advanced at a slower pace than for all other drugs.

When trends for new psychotropic drug prescriptions are broken down by major drug class, and up to this point I have been talking about psychotropic drugs as a unit, when we now break them down by drug class, it becomes apparent that the large overall increase—31 percent—that occurred between 1958 and 1965 is mainly attributable to minor tranquilizers. If you look at chart 3 either in the handout or up here, this can be seen.

(Chart 3 follows:)