

One was a letter from 36 Western Reserve medical students in the Nov. 14 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine saying they were returning kits they had received under similar circumstances.

Another catalyst, Pohl said, was an elective series of five lectures on pharmacology delivered as part of a second-year course by Dr. Richard Burack, author of "The Handbook of Prescription Drugs," and a teacher at the school. Dr. Burack was described by Pohl as "the Ralph Nader of the medical profession."

Still another source of inspiration for the move was a talk given by a guest lecturer in Dr. Burack's course. Pohl identified him as Benjamin Gordon, a staff economist for the Senate Committee on Small Business's subcommittee on monopoly.

Pohl said the 45 medical kits were taken by car late Friday afternoon to Lilly's office in the Prudential Building. He said a secretary told him she was not authorized to take back the kits and advised Pohl to return Monday. Pohl said he would.

Efforts to reach spokesmen for Lilly proved unsuccessful. "We are not attacking Lilly," Pohl said. "What they've done is good business, good advertising and perfectly legal. Our point is that an unhealthy relationship exists between the drug industry and the medical profession. We don't think this relationship will be improved by the sending of free medical kits by a drug company to young medical students."

Pohl emphasized that neither Dr. Burack nor Gordon had participated in any way in the movement. He said that although Dr. Burack "seemed pleased" by the movement, "he'll probably hate the publicity."

Pohl conceded that Lilly, along with other drug companies, had been invited by the class to send the kits last year but that "we now feel we made a mistake."

In a five-paragraph letter sent to the company headquarters in Indianapolis, the 45 students charged that the medical profession "does not maintain a proper distance from the (drug) industry."

"This distance is essential for the doctor's objectivity," the letter continued. "Since the doctor is in a unique economic position, namely that of directing what the consumer will buy, strict objectivity in his obligation to the patient."

"This objectivity is endangered when medical students accept instruments. Naturally, such gifts engender in the student a sense of familiarity and gratitude toward the houses that can afford to give them."

"In a subtle but real way, these attitudes can undermine the critical objectivity which must underlie both the medical and economic decisions of prescription writing," the letter stated.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 2, 1969]

MEDICAL STUDENTS PLAN TO RETURN GIFT INSTRUMENTS

(By Richard D. Lyons)

Forty-five students at the Harvard Medical School, who said they believed that "an unhealthy relationship exists between the drug industry and the medical profession," decided Friday to return a \$40 bag of diagnostic instruments that each had been given by a pharmaceutical company.

The second-year students, who conceded that they had invited the offer last year, said in a statement that "we now feel that we made a mistake and think it proper to return the instruments" to Eli Lilly & Co. of Indianapolis.

In a letter to the company, the students said that such gifts undermined the "objectivity" of doctors and medical students because such gifts "engender a sense of familiarity and gratitude" toward those companies that dispense them.

"In a subtle but real way these attitudes can undermine the critical objectivity which must underlie both the medical and economic decisions of prescription writing," the letter continued.

"In an analogous situation, it is universally recognized that an official who awards contracts should not accept gifts from bidders.

"Our aim is to establish good habits for ourselves early in our training and to promote discussion of the relationship between the drug industry, the medical profession and the patient," the letter said.