

We feel that the educational aids and medical instruments we receive from drug companies were primarily designed to influence our future prescribing habits. They were advertisements for certain drug companies as a whole rather than for individual products. We feel that it is wiser for medical students not to participate in this advertising process, because it tends to put them in conflict with the ethical goals listed above in the following ways:

1. We feel this advertising is founded on the psychological principle that doctors, like people generally, will feel that a better-known company makes better products. The more gifts the medical student receives from a company, the more familiar he will be with its name, and the more he will trust the company. Obviously, this does not constitute an adequate basis for the objective assessment of each drug on its own merits. Yet this preconceived trust has a tendency to supplant critical thinking. It is the medical student's responsibility to fight this tendency.

Again, I would bring up the Panalba situation that Senator Nelson mentioned. Somewhere that attitude arose, and I think it was here.

2. Through this form of advertising, the medical student becomes disproportionately familiar with those drug houses which can offer expensive promotional campaigns. Frequently these same companies can afford such campaigns because they charge higher prices for certain drugs. Moreover, drug advertising generally fails to carry any price information. Thus the student may become familiar with expensive brand-name drugs while remaining unaware of the merits of less expensive equivalents and, what is more dangerous, never be aware of the imbalance of his knowledge.

3. The gifts we received were ultimately paid for out of the pockets of the patient. They represent a hidden part of the cost of the drug. The patient is generally unaware that he is paying for free gifts to medical students, as well as gifts to doctors in innumerable forms. This constitutes a form of income derived from the patient without his knowledge or consent. It is also equivalent to charging excessive medical fees. In both ways, we feel, it is damaging to the relationship between the doctor and the patient.

4. We fear the appearance of a conflict-of-interest. By accepting these gifts from drug companies, while directing patients to buy their products, we would be deriving pecuniary benefit from drug companies at the same time as we created pecuniary rewards for them. This would entail an actual conflict-of-interest only if we sent patients to buy a particular drug because we have received gifts from its manufacturer. We all feel this is very unlikely. However, no matter how great the rectitude of every member of the profession, we maintain that it is unwise voluntarily to enter into a situation which has even the appearance of impropriety. A dramatic illustration of this principle at a high level in the Federal Government is fresh in our memories.

5. The sense of gratitude which the student naturally develops toward the companies providing gifts, interferes with his motivation to examine, with a critical eye, the whole complex of socio-economic issues involving drug prescriptions. On the one hand, the student feels it is ungentlemanly to be critical of an organization from which he has received a gift. On the other hand, the student who has accepted a gift cannot criticize the giver without criticizing himself. Thus to