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Senator NELSON. Here we have five panels of 25 doctors of great distinction and national reputation making a recommendation that all fixed combination anti-infectives—all of which are widely advertised and widely prescribed in this country—be removed from the marketplace. These drugs are still widely advertised in JAMA—just as they have been for years.

My question is: What has the journal done to advise physicians about the conclusions of these panels that these drugs are ineffective as fixed combinations and should be removed from the market?

Dr. TALBOTT. We have not received the official document in publishable form from the National Research Council, so we could not have prepared a communication.

Senator NELSON. What puzzles me about this, frankly, Doctor, is that here is an historic event in the history of drugs and medicine involving the conclusions of some of the most distinguished people in the medical profession, recommending that these drugs be removed from the marketplace, some as ineffective and some as not safe. Are you saying you have not commented on this at all?

Dr. TALBOTT. I am saying we have not received a publishable manuscript on this subject.

Senator NELSON. Well, you have, I assume, received a copy in your office of the New England Journal of Medicine? They ran it.

Dr. TALBOTT. Yes.

Senator NELSON. Well, that is publishable, is it not?

Dr. TALBOTT. It was not submitted to us for publication. We received about a thousand medical journals each week and each month with interesting and important subjects in them.

It is completely impossible for us to find space to handle them. We do not republish material. We rely upon the council on drugs, for example. We have 50 councils and committees that summarize important data for us. And as a council or committee reports, it is quite possible that maybe we would publish on this.

My job is to review unsolicited publishable communications.

Senator NELSON. What puzzles me is this—JAMA is a distinguished journal whose responsibility, as I see it, is to advise the doctors of this country on the practice of good medicine. Here we have what is probably one of the most important events in the history of drugs. Your council gave, what I consider, a strong endorsement of the position of these panels and it would seem to me since you have been advertising these drugs and have promoted them in your journal, there would be some kind of obligation immediately to notify all the profession that the distinguished panel recommends their removal from the marketplace?

Dr. TALBOTT. Let's get it clear, Senator, I do not know whether there is any implication that the editor of the journal or the scientific publications is in any way affected by any communications or any pressures from the drug industry. We operate completely independently.