

TABLE X.—FAMILIARITY WITH "THE MEDICAL LETTER"

[In percent]

Choice of answers	Specialists	General practitioners	All doctors
Yes, I use it regularly.....	20	25	22
Yes, I use it often.....	10	20	15
Yes, but I rarely use it.....	36	25	30
Yes, but I have never used it.....	7	10	8
No.....	28	20	24
Total answers.....			523

Question 11.—Do you consider The Medical Letter an adequately authoritative, unbiased, and thereof useful source of information on new drugs?

Although the doctors were directed to omit this and the following question if their answer to Question 10 was "No", it was realized during the analysis of results that this was an error in instruction (Table XI). Therefore we recorded answers to these questions *only* if the preceding answer was either "Yes, I use it regularly" or "Yes, I use it often."

TABLE XI.—OPINION OF "THE MEDICAL LETTER"

[In percent]

Choice of answers	Specialists	General practitioners	All doctors
Yes.....	56	42	47
No, but it is the best source of information of this type presently available.....	39	56	49
No.....	2	1	2
No opinion.....	2	2	2
Total answers ¹	79	113	195

¹ See text for explanation.

Question 12—If the Medical Letter presented a clearly adverse report on either the safety or effectiveness of a new drug you were using, or anticipated using, what influence do you think this might have on your treatment plans? (Assume the drug in question could not generally be considered a 'life-saving drug', and that there are older, more widely used drugs available, and recommended for the condition.)

Of the 195 doctors who answered this question, and had stated earlier they read this publication regularly or often, 89% stated that they would heed the adverse report. Several suggested that if the adverse report had to do with safety, they would not use the drug until they had more information, but if the report concerned efficacy, they would use their own judgment as to continuing it.

SUMMARY

A total of 531 physicians from Southwestern Ontario responded to a questionnaire that sought their reactions to current methods of drug promotion—a response rate of 33.5%. The distribution of general practitioners and various specialists was comparable to the Canadian average. Most physicians had graduated in the 1940's; 80% had qualified in Canada, 10% in the United Kingdom. Direct mail drug advertising was reported to be the least informative and/or acceptable to 67% of all doctors, and the same number gave negative or hostile answers when asked for their thoughts on this type of promotion; it was sorted through but rarely read by 45%, and rarely seen by another 20%. Drug detailmen were reported to be most informative and/or acceptable by 46% of the doctors and most of them were rated favourably as to personality, reliability and honesty, but not so favourably as to drug and general information, and usefulness to doctors. The majority of doctors declared that recommendations from colleagues (or consultants) were the greatest influence to use a new drug. On the promotion of drugs in general, a majority thought it ethical and 77% thought it was not economical. Of the respondents, 94% thought there should be a regular publication