

lightened preference in an information vacuum. Supplementing his own knowledge and the sources of information is the approval process at both the local hospital and national agency level.

He is also supported by technical and scientific data provided by our pharmacy service and cost and market data provided by our supply service.

I would like to digress slightly to call the subcommittee's attention to the unique and extensive affiliation program between the Nation's medical schools and the Veterans' Administration. This affiliation program provides us with a vast body of fresh information on both laboratory and clinical research, pharmacological studies, new drug developments, in a more comprehensive and timely manner than otherwise might be available. We make full use of this information and do not, as some have charged of private physicians, rely primarily upon promotional and advertising sources for knowledge of drug products.

Senator HATFIELD. I would like to interrupt at this point, Mr. Chairman. I would like to first of all commend you on your digression here, because I think it is a very fundamental point that you are making. I am not sure you are aware of some comments I made on July 6 which are recorded in the record, and I would like to quote from that:

Several critical VA programs have been neglected because of funding crises. One way to improve medical care in the VA hospitals would be to intensify and expand affiliations between VA hospitals and medical schools. However, valuable programs between medical schools and VA hospitals are dependent upon the assumption that facilities and equipment are comparable at each of the institutions.

Could you expand a little bit on this, because I think this is, frankly, one of the most important ways in which we can improve and expand the Veterans' hospital programs. You are aware of the physical proximity of the Veterans' hospital in Portland, Oreg., to the University of Oregon Medical School, and I know somewhat of the exchange there and the working relationship between the hospital and the medical school.

Are there specific plans that you have in mind to expand this kind of working relationship in other parts of the country?

Mr. JOHNSON. Senator, 79 of the 101 medical schools in the United States are now affiliated in some manner with VA hospitals. It is the policy of this Administration, Dr. James Musser, who is the Chief Medical Director, and myself, that all possible will be done to enhance the relationship and the affiliation. I think I should add at this point that this is not confined entirely to the medical schools, that there are many schools of allied health sciences and, in fact, today it numbers something over 500 affiliations that we have, nursing schools, dental schools and the like, all kinds of activities; that particularly in those general medical and surgical hospitals, the highly active and acute hospitals as well as the psychiatric hospitals, we are meeting constantly with the Council of Deans of the medical schools of the United States, searching for ways in which we can enhance the affiliation, and we are asking for certain legislation now to allow us to expand our sharing agree-