

Dr. WELLS. I am not aware of controlled studies that would counter that. On the other hand, I believe that the language of the Letter itself simply says that there are none, there is nothing to prove this. It does not say positively.

Senator NELSON. Therefore, why pay \$53 for Valium or \$43.50 for Librium when phenobarbital is available for 50 cents. Why not follow the Medical Letter's procedure of starting with phenobarbital?

Dr. WELLS. We have literally thousands of physicians who simply do not subscribe to that viewpoint, sir.

Senator NELSON. Just to cite for the record the testimony of Dr. Harry L. Williams, professor of pharmacology, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, Ga.,¹ who also is affiliated with the Grady Hospital. In answering a question on Librium, he said:

Librium [sells] somewhere around \$50 a thousand. Faced with a choice between whether to use that drug or to use phenobarbital, which we use at Grady Hospital, and which in many cases is equal to and in some cases superior to, Librium, which cost us 9 cents per thousand, this is 9 cents versus \$50. . . .

Here is a statement by a distinguished pharmacologist, in a large general hospital in Atlanta, and I am puzzled why we would spend this amount of taxpayers' dollars when there are no controlled clinical studies demonstrating the superiority of either Librium or Valium to phenobarbital.

Dr. WELLS. I think your point is well taken, but I am afraid we are in an area of opinion, and we are uncertain and, therefore, simply must go along with our doctors who say we think this is the best for our patients.

Mr. JOHNSON. Senator, I can only speak here as a layman in this, and know nothing at all about clinical studies and so on, but I want to point out to you that the population at the Grady Hospital or any other that you mention is considerably different than the population that we do have in some of our veterans' hospitals, particularly in the matter of the aging, particularly these that come in, particularly the comment that was made by Dr. Wells awhile ago that some of these drugs have been successful in our alcoholism treatment centers and so on, and that I want at this point to speak up for the doctors within the VA system, those within our rolls. I am sure it is not their desire to spend taxpayers' dollars just to be spending dollars, but they are wanting to deliver the very best there is in medicine, and I have confidence in their competency to make these kinds of decisions and to bring about the kind of results that they are looking for.

And I see every day, as I visit hospitals, what they are doing, and if there is any measure of success, I believe they are reaching it.

Senator NELSON. Well, the purpose, of course, of establishing your therapeutic committee is to use the best expertise there is in the country to be sure that drugs are rationally prescribed.

There is a tremendous amount of expert testimony by the best medical experts in the country that there is a lot of irrational prescribing.

Mr. JOHNSON. Senator, I think that the testimony is taken into

¹ Hearings, Part 2, p. 457.