

account by these committees, coupled with their own experience, and I believe that they are exercising prudent action as they prescribe these drugs.

Senator NELSON. I am sure your intention is good and you have established formularies and therapeutic committees. Nevertheless, it seems to me that it is not working as well as it ought to.

Here is another example: Deprol, a drug mixture containing benactyzine HCL and meprobamate, an antidepressant. The Medical Letter says:

Deprol is of no value for the treatment of either neurotic or psychotic depression.

The Medical Letter also says:

Neither of the ingredients in Deprol is effective against depression. Furthermore, there is "no convincing evidence that this drug has any value except in cases amenable to placebo therapy."

Why buy it? Is there any evidence to refute what the Medical Letter says?

Dr. WELLS. I am not aware of any evidence on that, and I personally would subscribe to the opinion expressed in the Letter. I think again we are back to the whole problem of the fallibility of the absolute control, and of our necessity to a degree to go along with, while we educate and persuade the physicians that prescribe for the veteran population.

Senator NELSON. I have a whole list of examples here. It just seems to me that if we cannot get our top executive levels, where you have the authority and the availability of the expertise to establish a sound prescribing policy, then we cannot do it any place.

Darvon is also currently being purchased and it is bought as an analgesic. The Medical Letter says there is no evidence to "establish the superiority of 65-milligram doses of propoxyphene to two tablets of either aspirin or APC."

Then it goes on to say that the 32- to 65-milligram doses of Darvon "has consistently proven inferior to aspirin."

Dr. WELLS. Well, my answer to that would be that again I think the Letter is quite correct. I think that one, Darvon, can be equated to a certain amount of aspirin or a visit from the chaplain. But here we are again in an area of incomplete control.

Senator NELSON. Well, I will just recite a couple more here. It seems to me that with the expertise that the Department has available, with the support of all of the best medical scientists, clinicians, pharmacologists in the country, that the Veterans' Administration could establish some formulary control at the national level for all of its hospitals, using the best scientific knowledge we have.

Panalba is another example. In 1957, Dr. Harry Dowling, whom I am sure you know as one of the most distinguished physicians and scientists in this country, at that time chairman of the drug council for the AMA, together with eight other distinguished people signed an editorial in the AMA Journal. The other signers were Dr. Maxwell Finland, who I am sure you know, Dr. Morton Hamburger, Dr. Ernest Jawetz, Dr. Vernon Knight, Dr. Mark H. Lep-