

8554 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

July 10, 1972

B-164031(2)

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During testimony before your Subcommittee on May 10, 1972, concerning the present status of competition in the pharmaceutical industry, you requested that we furnish for the record a list of the prescription drugs purchased centrally by the Veterans Administration (VA) and the Defense Personnel Support Center (DPSC) that are not monographed in the United States Pharmacopeia (USP) or the National Formulary (NF).

We found that 34 percent of the drug items purchased centrally by DPSC and 33 percent of those purchased centrally by the VA Marketing Center are not monographed in the USP or NF. Listings of the drugs which are centrally purchased by DPSC and VA, and included in the agency supply catalogs but not monographed in the USP or NF are provided as enclosure 1.

According to Defense Personnel Support Center personnel there are three primary reasons why they procure non-monographed drugs. These are:

1. NF and USP compendia monographs limited dosage forms as well as active drug ingredients. Many of the drugs procured by DPSC are in dosage forms useful to DPSC but are not included in the monographs. For example, in the case of Acetaminophen solution, the NF monographs an elixir with a usual dose of a teaspoon. While this is adequate for older children, fractional teaspoon doses are required for infants, but fractional doses are not monographed in the NF and this poses a problem. To provide prescribing physicians with dosage forms for children, DPSC stocks the solution in a calibrated dropper bottle which is not monographed even though the solution is the same substance which is monographed in larger doses.
2. Both compendia are conservative on combination drugs, and although many irrational combinations have been declared ineffective by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for good reasons, according to DPSC many combination drugs continue in medical use for equally good reasons, e.g., prenatal vitamin and mineral tablets, belladonna and phenobarbital tablets, oral contraceptive mixtures of estrogens and progestins. Some, such as the combination of chloroquine and primaquine--used to suppress malaria--may meet a peculiar military need which would not justify inclusion in the national compendia.