

8620 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

information available to them, in readily usable form, as they require for the proper selection of drugs. Much of our effort is aimed at assuring the availability of this useful information.

Drugs Classified Less Than Effective and Implementation of FDA Pronouncements

In the past 18 months we have taken a number of positive steps to advise against the use of drugs classified as less than effective and to implement FDA pronouncements on these drugs. Our initial implementation was through a Department of Medicine and Surgery Circular 10-70-237 dated December 4, 1970. This required the removal of ineffective drugs from station formularies and called for contacts with physicians in each instance where such drugs were prescribed. The physician was to be notified of the FDA classification, and he was asked to consider the use of available alternatives. The physician was informed that if he did not agree to an alternative medication, the drug would have to be obtained by the patient from a private pharmacy. This policy statement was followed by DM&S Circular 10-70-286 dated December 30, 1970, which prohibited VA stations from carrying stocks of ineffective drugs in inventory. DM&S Circular 10-71-16, issued a few days later, prohibited purchase of these drugs by VA under all conditions and also alerted field station personnel that changes to or additions to lists of drugs classified by FDA would appear regular in the Federal Register.

DM&S Professional Services Letter 1L-11-71-44, dated July 13, 1971, gave updated listings of FDA classifications of drugs through April 30, 1971. This Professional Services Letter also re-emphasized VA policy on ineffective drugs.