

Techniques Employed to Monitor Drug Selection Practices

We are currently employing several techniques to monitor drug selection practices. The Therapeutics Agents and Pharmacy Reviews Committee at each VA hospital is our primary instrument for this surveillance. Through peer review of the prescribing practices of our staff physicians, we are assured that the knowledge and information of those responsible for patient treatment are combined in determining which drugs should be included in station formularies. Committee members raise questions as to the safety and efficacy of specific drugs and combine their knowledge to evaluate and select the best agent. Education rather than edict is used to achieve rational drug selection in our system. The minutes of these committee meetings are reported to the Central Office each month. They reflect many thoughtful decisions on the use or non-acceptance of therapeutic agents. I am attaching some excerpts from these minutes as Appendix A.

Our Central Office Pharmacy Service routinely reviews records of drugs purchased by individual field stations. When these reviews detect unusual usage patterns or significant usage of drugs whose effectiveness is not generally accepted, formal inquiry is made to the field station. Its Therapeutics Agents and Pharmacy Reviews Committee is asked to examine the question and to report its findings. At the same time, our Marketing Center, which purchases the drugs, conducts a similar kind of review to determine that stations are using the most economical source of supply. The scope of these reviews is significant. No less than 114 letters of inquiry were sent to VA field stations within the last two months.