

How Much Does It Cost?

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The Air Force Medical Materiel Field Office Letter Number 2-71, dated 5 February 1971, quoted from a "million dollar letter" entitled "Rational Prescribing of Drugs" which was published by Headquarters USAM. The third paragraph read:

In addition to those drugs determined to be ineffective, there is the matter of high cost drugs being prescribed when equally effective but much less expensive drugs are available. Many experts are convinced that Librium and Valium are vastly overprescribed today. Similarly, Darvon probably has no greater analgesic effectiveness than aspirin and there are totally effective low cost alternatives for Gralise. Therapeutic committees must regularly review their own drugs consumption data to insure that formularies not only satisfy the needs of the staff but also accurately reflect the judg-

ments of current medical literature and the worth of the patients involved. We cannot justify the purchase of high cost drugs when equally effective but less expensive medications are available.

How can we readily identify the comparative costs of similar drugs, and how can this information be made readily accessible to the practicing physician? The data automation system has many reports that are used to manage our medical resources, but there is not a simple, convenient way in which the practicing Air Force physician can identify and compare the relative cost of similar pharmaceuticals.

There are several commercial publications that present wholesale and retail costs, and

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COMMERCE NAME	COST*	COST PER DAY	COST PER 30 DAYS	ISSUES FROM MED SUPPLY IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS	DOLLAR VALUE OF SUPPLY
Dexedrine But Tab 5mg 100s	\$0.29	0.5¢ 1¢	0.005¢	11 x 100	\$1.20 \$3.70
Phenobarbital Tab 1/2gr 100s	\$0.13	0.4¢	0.0013¢	12 x 100	\$1.33
Amobarbital Tab 21 500s	\$14.00	3¢	3¢	1 x 500	\$14.00
Phenobarbital 500s	\$6.70	7¢	7¢	0	0
Phenobarbital 75mg 1600s	\$76.60	8¢	8¢	0	0
Phenobarbital 75mg 100s	\$8.37	9¢	9¢	51 x 100	\$490.37
Phenobarbital Tablets 25mg 1600s	\$29.20	9¢	2¢	1 x 1600	\$29.20

TOTAL \$1,000.00

* Based on current prices for January 1971.

Figure 1