

COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY 11893

The fifth recommendation with which VA is involved asked that we "consider using a standardized coding system, such as the National Drug Code for identifying local purchases of drugs not having Federal stock numbers."

A National Drug Code listing was prepared and programmed for nine character input. We have continued to accumulate NDC data as it pertains to the nine characters. Subsequently, the FDA changed the NDC number from a nine to a new ten character sequence. We understood informally from FDA that other changes in sequencing were probable. Therefore, we suspended further computer programming because of possible expansion of the labeler code from five to six characters and because of the transition by industry to the five character labeler code. A revision of our computer system is being made to accommodate the new ten character sequence.

The final recommendation would have the Secretaries of Defense, HEW, and the VA Administrator, "Review the frequency and type of inspections required and the related changes needed to facilitate the transfer to FDA of all quality assurance responsibilities pertaining to the purchase of drugs for Federal agencies.

FDA Government-Wide Quality Assurance Program.

In support of this recommendation, the Veterans Administration, along with DSA, DPSC, Public Health Service, and FDA personnel, were formed into the Five Task Forces, as follow:

- No. 1 Specifications
- No. 2 Standards
- No. 3 Plant Inspection