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- (11) Fischler, F., *Pharm. Zentralhalle*, 74, 221 (1933).
- (12) Poethke, W., *Ibid.*, 74, 313 (1933).
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A SERVICE THAT BUILT A PRESCRIPTION BUSINESS.*

BY L. D. BRACKEN.

This paper is an attempt to briefly relate the use of an unusual idea in the building or developing of a prescription business.

After several years of practical experience in drug stores of the Middlewest the writer entered a pharmacy college on the Pacific Coast, and thereafter a medical college on the Atlantic Coast. He was impressed with the fact that both types of colleges did not teach enough practical therapeutics. The turmoil of the World War interrupted his medical college work, after one and one-half years. He re-entered the drug field in a general store; later, in 1921, he launched into exclusive prescription business. Key locations (medical buildings) were not available, so a location one block from a commercial building housing about forty doctors was chosen as a starting place. A limited amount of capital made necessary a small stock, and the potential prescribers in the above-mentioned building were solicited and asked regarding their likes and dislikes on most popular drug items, brands, etc. The reactions and responses of most of the doctors were encouraging, and the store was duly opened on December 15, 1921.

The writer concluded from experience in school, that lack of practical therapeutics in the curriculum of both medical and pharmacy colleges left a vulnerable spot, and with this thought in mind, it was decided to undertake a direct mail *Bulletin of Information Service* to the doctors.

The first bulletin was typewritten on legal size paper, printed as a letterhead, with a 3" x 4" cut in the lower right-hand corner which read "We invite you to phone Main 2110 for dependable information." The message was addressed to the individual doctor and started with this statement—"Dear Doctor: We offer the following information"—the subject matter was limited to four paragraphs. Each paragraph stated brief information of unusual character about some product in which we thought the doctor would be interested. In this first bulletin we informed the doctors that "Arsenicals were about to be made available through the drug trade." From the first issue of 155 bulletins we received eleven requests for further information regarding "Arsenicals," such as "When will you have it in stock?," "How much will it cost?," "Can you supply literature?," etc. This response was thrilling, and the success of the idea seemed assured. However, it required almost a year before we were justified in really saying it was a success.

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We discovered immediately that extreme care must be used in making any statements regarding medicinal products, and for that reason we confined ourselves almost exclusively to official products or new and nonofficial items.

The requests for information which finally began to come in are most interesting. For several years a file was kept of the unusual questions, which were recorded as near as possible *in the exact words* in which they were received. A request for the dose of Digitalis or some question comparable, was not recorded, as any pharmacist should be able to furnish this answer; but how many pharmacists could answer this one which came in from a large Hospital? "Send us some serum Bilirubin and tell us the dose;" and from a physician—"What antidote besides Sodium Thio-sulphate is available for 606 poisoning?;" and this from another physician—"What have you to stop uterine bleeding, Ergot has no effect?;" and this from a Hospital—"Send us some Tololo Tablets." This was interesting; we saw the patient's chart and the order read "Tololo Tablets." However, careful study showed the order to mean "10-10-10 Tablets." The order had been hurriedly written, the figures run together, and "tololo" was plainly written thereby. This from another physician—"I have a woman patient thirty-two years old with a blood sugar of 70; give her something to increase her blood sugar, she has plenty of sugar intake." This from an M.D.—"Send me something quick to remove mercurochrome stains from my trouser leg." This from an M.D.—"Send me some Streptococcic Serum for Cardioarthrides." This from a nurse—"Doctor wants a complete outfit for Arsphenamine with scale for neutralizing according to Stokes." From an M.D.—"What can I give my wife for a persistent hacking cough; something without narcotic?" This from a large clinic—"Send a course of Urea for Blood Urea test; patient weighs 172 pounds."

These references are a few of a great many requests which have been collected over a period of fourteen years.

Our mailing list now comprises about six hundred names and includes the pharmacists in hospitals and many of our competitors.

During this fourteen-year period we have introduced a number of new products for ethical pharmaceutical houses; this idea is a decided advantage to us and helps the manufacturer in rapidly gaining an entrée for his product. On several occasions we have used our *Bulletin* to condemn fraudulent practices on the part of unscrupulous firms; this has been appreciated by the Medical Profession and we have received many compliments from their Association.

The material used in this service is mostly drawn from ethical, medical and pharmaceutical publications. Manufacturers' reports and literature are also used, if the claims are conservative and the firm has a good reputation. The source of all our information is recorded and is frequently used and loaned to doctors and dentists. We try to publish some propaganda on N. F. and U. S. P. in each number. We no longer publish prices on office supplies, but we do mention the price on new items.

This bulletin service has cemented a bond of friendship and confidence between the doctors and our store that has more than compensated for the effort and expense involved. Seven registered pharmacists, a bookkeeper, two porters and two motorcycle deliverymen are now employed by the firm and the business has grown to a volume near six figures.