

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Conducted by Paul C. Olsen.*

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ARE INVITED AND WELCOME.

Readers are invited to submit comments, criticisms and suggestions regarding the material which appears in this department. The Editor also will undertake to answer questions regarding general problems of business management. Letters of general interest will be published, but the writer's name will not be revealed without his permission.

POPULARIZING THE PREPARATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES PHARMACOPŒIA AND NATIONAL FORMULARY.

(Continued from p. 1027.)

Many are the doleful predictions about the future of pharmacy. It is a favorite subject of the cartoonists and vaudeville actors, and the old jokes about being able to buy everything but drugs in a modern drug store are being revamped in accordance with recent trends of the times.

With these frequently-made comments in mind, the suggestion that it is possible to create a wider use of the preparations of the United States Pharmacopœia and National Formulary is likely to be considered by some, an impossible one.

Pharmacy Week has come and gone. More Pharmacy Week window displays were used in the United States and other countries than ever before. More publicity in more different media, including the radio, was given to Pharmacy Week than ever before. Pharmacy Week windows were not only more numerous but attracted more attention than ever before. The world map showing the sources of the principal drugs listed in the United States Pharmacopœia and National Formulary, which was distributed to retail druggists by the members of the National Wholesale Druggists' Association, attracted attention wherever it was displayed. This was especially true when displays of the drugs themselves, sources of which were shown on the map, were also displayed with the map.

Doesn't this world-wide and rapidly increasing interest in professional pharmacy, both within and without the drug trade, indicate that, in spite of the luncheonette and other drug store side-lines, the professional aspects of pharmacy are of consuming interest to the general public, if only those engaged in the drug trade will take the trouble to bring them before the people?

Pharmacy Week is intended not as a means of promoting the sales of specific merchandise, but to increase public interest in professional pharmacy. With the interest which it has been demonstrated can be created by such an event as Pharmacy Week, it certainly appears evident that a retail pharmacist, if he will, can use this interest to promote the sale of products which are representative of the professional side of pharmacy.

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This is an easy statement to make, but a far more difficult one to carry out. I think that nearly all druggists will admit that they probably can increase the sales of U. S. P. and N. F. preparations, but where to begin?

A general campaign to increase interest in U. S. P. and N. F. preparations is likely to produce general results—that is, no definitely measurable increases in sales of such products are likely to occur.

How can they, because, with hundreds of preparations listed, it is a physical impossibility to bring them all before the professional and lay patrons of a pharmacist in a general campaign. If he can't do this, how can he expect these people to make their own selections from the many pages of these two standards?

There is an additional practical difficulty, in that part of the preparations of the U. S. P. and N. F. are regularly dispensed—in fact, must be or should be dispensed, only on physicians' orders.

On the other hand, there is another group of preparations which, as I mentioned in the preceding article in this series, are commonly accepted household remedies which physicians actually encourage people to buy from their druggists. The surprising thing, as I suggested in that article, is that so few of them, necessary and desirable as they are, are to be found in the medicine chests of even the best informed families.

The following list of household remedies taken from the U. S. P. and N. F. is not complete. It is simply included here for purposes of illustration to show definitely a few of the specific items of merchandise to which a druggist may find it profitable to give serious attention in promoting their sale, instead of preparations, the components of which he is not informed about.

Spices, cream of tartar, tartaric acid, citric acid, boric acid, alum, sodium bicarbonate, sodium borate, magnesium carbonate, calcium carbonate, cochineal and other colors, flavoring essences; glycerite of starch, lactose, perfumed spirit, benzoated suet, hamamelis water, aromatic vinegar, dentrifrice, mouth wash, alkaline aromatic solution, compound solution of cresol, solution of chlorinated soda, tincture of green soap, glycerin; spirit of peppermint, spirit of camphor, hydrogen peroxide, cataplasma kaolin, paraffin dressing, petroleum jelly, carron oil, tincture iodine, tincture of arnica, cold cream, collodions, potassium nitrate papers, aromatic spirit of ammonia, ammonia liniment, oxide of zinc ointment, Epsom salt, solution of soda and mint, solution of calcium hydroxide, compound resin cerate, camphorated brown plaster, soap plaster, soap liniment, chloroform liniment, camphorated oil, acetic turpentine liniment; aromatic castor oil, emulsion of castor oil, oil of wintergreen, liquid petrolatum, cod liver oil, cod liver oil emulsion, Rochelle salt, seidlitz powders, effervescing salts, milk of magnesia, glycerin suppositories, honey of sodium borate, compound powder of glycyrrhiza. With even this incomplete list before him, it is evidently possible for a druggist to determine for himself the selling possibilities of the preparations mentioned and others listed.

Some druggists will say they have no sale whatsoever for some of the items listed, and for others they will say there are proprietaries which are more suitable or at least which are in greater demand. I have no quarrel with such statements; it is only natural that the demand for preparations of this kind—in fact for products of any kind—should vary with localities and inclination of proprietors.

The five basic factors which determine the salability of the product are listed below. With these five basic factors in mind, I think it is possible and practical for any druggist to take each of the items of the list and determine whether they deserve selling effort on his part. That is not the end of the story, however. Merchandising is far from an exact science and the only way to prove the salability of a product, even after such an analysis, as suggested, is by careful test and try-outs in the store: Window displays, counter displays, store detail, and detailing doctors, dentists and others requiring such preparations.

The first of the five factors which determine the salability of a product is its uses. What are they and are they uses which will appeal to the patrons of the store? Cold cream, for instance, is a larger proportion of the sales in some stores than it is in others. This may be due to merely a lack of selling effort or it may be due to the characteristics or occupations of the people this store serves.

The second factor is the determining of the salability of the products as to its users. Who are they? How many are they? And are they all going to be interested in the preparation? Obviously, if only a small proportion of a store's patrons can be interested in a product, selling effort can be expended more profitably on some item with a wider appeal.

The third factor is sales frequency—that is, the rapidity with which the item is used and bought again. An item such as soap liniment may sell to a rather large number of people, but it is used so slowly that repeat business is likely to be very slow in coming. The same thing is true of tincture of iodine. On the other hand, such products as cod liver oil, Epsom salt, boric acid and cold cream are used rapidly and the opportunity for quick repeat business is much greater.

The fourth factor is competition. How much competition is there? How aggressive is it? Some preparations of the U. S. P. and N. F. have little or no competition from similar proprietaries or from other U. S. P. or N. F. preparations. A product in which there is little or no competition involves, many times, the necessity of educating its prospective patrons to its desirability. On the other hand, a product which has many competitors finds ready acceptance, but an individual druggist has his difficulties in obtaining his share of the business.

The fifth factor is the selling and distribution methods used. For instance a druggist, to-day, would have more difficulty in obtaining business in spices and flavoring extracts than he would have had years ago when the drug store was almost the only outlet for merchandise of this type; now almost all the business goes through the grocery trade. The very fact that many of the household remedies listed in the U. S. P. and N. F. can be sold only by licensed pharmacists is a decided advantage to the druggist who is trying to promote the sale of these preparations. He has little or no legal competition from other types of stores.

(To be continued)

No single group in pharmaceutical activities can stand alone, and is helpless in a degree, without the support and cooperation of the other associated and related groups.