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— *The Editor Comments* —

FOR A SOPHISTICATED PUBLIC

The pharmaceutical industry can be rightly proud of the extensive steps it takes in testing new drugs to assess their degree of safety or lack of toxicity. While much of this information or testing has been required under the new drug requirements of the federal law, nevertheless, many firms have generally exceeded the minimum testing required in order to provide as much assurance as possible that a particular drug is adequately safe for use in the treatment of a particular illness.

Unfortunately, however, on the basis of the above experimentation many pharmaceutical firms will refer to their drugs as "safe" in promotion campaigns to physicians, pharmacists, and even to the public. In our opinion, this is most unfortunate and ill-advised, since no drug is completely "safe" and without some possible risk associated with its use or misuse.

Other industries, such as the automobile manufacturers and the electrical appliance producers, have long ago recognized that under certain conditions their products might result in injury to the public using them. This realistic attitude has been reflected in their advertising which rarely, if ever, refers to the safety or complete lack of hazard in using their products.

Why is it, then, that the pharmaceutical industry feels that its products must be held out as being completely safe before those products will gain acceptance and use by the health professions or the public? It appears to us that the pharmaceutical industry might well consider directing more of its advertising and promotion resources toward education of the public to the fact that any drug—like everything else we use in everyday life—of necessity has a degree of fundamental hazard connected with it. The sooner that this basic fact is brought home to all those using drugs, the sooner we will have a sophisticated public utilizing the benefits of drugs with a proper realization of the cautions which must be exercised and the potential dangers which cannot be completely divorced from any drug therapy.

Edward G. Feldmann