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The "golden era" of drug discovery that primarily occurred immediately following World War II resulted in explosive growth and proliferation of the entire system of producing, marketing, and distributing drug products. This dramatically rapid growth, coupled with the fact that this boom largely occurred away from the public eye, combined to create a situation which was ripe for abuse as well as for public review and investigation.

The spotlight of public scrutiny was first focused on this area in December 1959 when the late Senator Kefauver launched his congressional committee hearings; from the initial day these hearings were highlighted by a series of headline catching revelations. Since then, the spotlight has been directed at this subject on almost a continuous basis as one or another congressional committee has probed into various facets of the pharmaceutical complex. Undoubtedly, these hearings have included various doses of politics, publicity seeking, and exaggeration. On the other hand, it is undeniable that they have also served to expose many serious and diverse abuses. In some cases, mere exposure of these practices has been sufficient to prompt voluntary corrective action; in other cases, however, specific legislation has been enacted to rectify the problems brought to light.

After fifteen years of such inquiry, one might expect that there would be little more to be told. But, on the contrary, the hearings conducted in recent weeks by the Nelson Senate Subcommittee served to bring out substantial new information, and the concurrent hearings conducted by the Kennedy Senate Subcommittee brought to light a whole series of marketing abuses originating with the industry and participated in by a substantial segment of the medical and pharmacy professions.

Through much of this fifteen-year experience there has been a tendency on the part of many of us to dismiss the revelations, the abuses, even the scandals, by asserting that we have not directly fostered these practices or participated in them. However, is it enough to be innocent? Is there not some responsibility on the part of even those who are guiltless to exert a positive influence to bring about change in their area of involvement?

The Kennedy hearings publicized the prostituting of drug samples by detailmen who use them to gain favor with practitioners, by physicians who trade them to pharmacists for razor blades and toothpaste, and by pharmacists who improperly use them in dispensing to patients. The practice of many company representatives to peruse confidential prescription files, as well as the willingness of many pharmacists to open their files in this manner, also was the subject of considerable eyebrow raising on the part of the Subcommittee and the general public alike. And the free goods, gifts, prizes, and assorted "payola," as it was termed by the Senator, likewise came in for a solid round of criticism.

The public image of every drug company, of every physician, of every pharmacist was tarnished at least a little bit by these disclosures. Some certainly deserved it, but others did not. Hoffmann-La Roche, for example, does not distribute unsolicited samples in recognition of all the potential and actual abuses in the system. Likewise, a solid core of pharmacists has been responsible for the advertising code which prohibits ads for free goods and deals in APHA journals and prohibits the handout of merchandise in APHA meeting exhibits.

Unfortunately, however, enough "good people" have not protested these promotion practices as loudly and vigorously as they could. Too many pharmacists in community and hospital practice, while not approving such practices, have not actively objected either. But those who have the greatest opportunity to exert a positive influence are those who are actually employed within the industry.

In particular, many pharmaceutical scientists have long closed their eyes to the marketing and promotion practices of the companies with which they are affiliated. They have excused themselves on the grounds that such matters are outside their area of responsibility and concern. However, as suggested above, when abuses come to light the fallout touches everyone; and those who are in more of a position to exert a positive influence, but neglect to do so, will be splattered with a proportionately bigger dose.

Individually, and through their professional societies, scientists can be an effective force in fostering reforms; for example, at the very least they could commend the courage and leadership of Hoffmann-La Roche in its policy on drug samples and push other firms to adopt similar policies.

*Edward G. Feldmann*