

The Care and Control of Prescriptions.

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Should the druggist be required by law to retain the original copy of every prescription compounded by him, and to furnish a copy only on request of the patient or of the physician?

The following is a section of the Missouri pharmacy law:

"Every druggist, proprietor of a drug store or pharmacist, shall carefully preserve all prescriptions compounded by him or those in his employ, numbering, dating and filing them in the order in which they are compounded, and shall produce the same in court or before any grand jury whenever thereto lawfully required, and on failing, neglecting or refusing to do so, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction shall be punished by a fine of not less than fifty nor more than one hundred dollars."

By the enactment of this section the lawmakers were inspired, not so much with the desire to protect the physician and the druggist, as to provide a means of detecting the unlawful selling of intoxicating liquors by collusion among the three parties primarily interested, the consumer completing the triangular arrangement; but, while the disreputable doctor and druggist may be punished by this provision of the law, others may utilize it as a shield and a defence. That all prescriptions should be carefully filed and in such manner as will insure them from damage while rendering them readily accessible, druggists generally are agreed; but the thoughtful care exercised in this important branch of the business is not uniform.

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss methods.

By the wording of the section of the Missouri pharmacy law quoted, the druggist is directed to file the prescription handed him to be compounded. This means the "original," not a "copy," yet the primary object of this section was not to decide who, in the State of Missouri, shall be considered the legal owner of this interesting scrap of paper.

The command to the druggist, in the words of the law, leaves no doubt as to the proper custodian of the prescription, and, as a logical deduction, decides the ownership. The model law which this association hopes ultimately to frame might appropriately contain such a section.

Druggists may be made defendants in damage suits. For a successful defence, if the fact to be established is the correct compounding of a prescription, the presentation in evidence of the original is quite essential. The question as to the ownership of the prescription is an old one, but so long as it is an open and vital one the discussion is in order.

A decision by one of the higher courts would be welcome. The inferior courts, in passing upon it, have contradicted one another.

No final decision is possible until there shall be a law for interpretation. Each state is at the mercy of its lawmakers. For a set of men in convention assembled to agree that certain matters should be controlled by law is simple enough. To secure the enactment of such a law by the state legislature is usually a very different matter. Legislation asked for by druggists is often regarded with suspicion. It is thought to be for the benefit of a class, the general welfare character of it not being usually recognized. After all of our gratuitous service to the public, our altruism may still be doubted.

It is a mistake to suppose that all of the ills of which we complain can be remedied by legislation, but this thought need not deter us from effort in what we conceive to be the direction of improvement. It ought not to be difficult to convince physicians and patients that druggists are the proper custodians of prescriptions; but what stand shall the druggist take if there be no law behind which he can retreat? It is not unusual for a customer to say: "Please return that prescription with the medicine. You may make and keep a copy of it if you wish to do so."

The druggist complies, and takes his chances on any future complications. To do otherwise would be to invite a contention which a politic business man studies to avoid. The practice of queuing copies of prescriptions originals remaining in the possession of the druggist, is a growing one.

From his standpoint the practice of refilling prescriptions, unless so authorized by the physician, must be considered in this connection. If we concede it to be the patient's privilege to demand and receive a copy of a prescription prepared for him, then it is not possible for the physician to control the matter of its repetition, unless there be an understanding on this point at the time it is written. The druggist, if requested by the doctor

not to give a copy of a prescription, will certainly see that his wishes are respected. It is the duty of the druggist, furthermore, to firmly decline to give a copy of a prescription except upon the request of the physician, if it should contain morphine, cocaine, or any other potent and dangerous drug. By the exercise of tact and politeness, he can prevent the precipitation of an unpleasant scene. With these exceptions the patient is likely to receive a copy of his prescription when he asks for it, and he is at liberty to carry it from store to store and get "bids" on the cost of compounding it.

Physicians very properly object to the frequent repetition of their prescriptions without consultation with them, but yet an illiberal policy on their part is apt to estrange patients, and result in damage to their practice in the end. The doctor, above all others, must be a man of good judgment. He usually is politic, discreet, and tactful.

Evil consequences do undoubtedly often follow indiscriminate self-medication. By a mutual understanding between the two professions, either with or without legal enactments, physician, pharmacist, and patient would all be benefited.

Besides the *Adansonia Gregorii*, another tree has recently been discovered that yields tartaric acid. This is the baobab tree of Senegal, whose farinaceous pulp surrounding the seed has been found to contain nearly 2 per cent. of free tartaric acid, and nearly 12 per cent. of bitartrate of potassium.

Sunflowers in Malaria. — An eminent Indian medical officer is satisfied that the growth of sunflowers in malarial soil is better than eucalyptus as a preventive of malaria. The Government of India are making extensive experiments to determine this point.

A French doctor has invented an electric helmet, inside of which is a small motor that vibrates strips of steel, the motor making 600 turns per minute. This whizzing is supposed to cure nervous headache, and put the sufferer to sleep.

Powdered Lanolin. — This is a German preparation composed of magnes. carb. zinc. oxide, or talc. with lanolin. The lanolin is dissolved in ether and the powder added; on evaporation the residue is powdered.