

# THALIDOMIDE -- Can it happen again?



First of five parts by Montreal physician Dr. Murray Katz

## The business of selling pills

# Nude catches doctor's eye but drug ads reveal little

### Patients need to know

Equally important to drug safety is the patient's need to know the name of the drug purchased.

In most provinces, the label on a prescription contains the name of the prescribing physician, the name of the patient, the date, the instructions for use, the name of the pharmacy and an identification code number. Perhaps the most essential piece of information is left off, that is, the name of the drug.

The tradition has arisen in North American pharmacies that the patient should not be informed of the medication he is taking unless the physician specifically instructs the pharmacist to write the name on the bottle.

Those who defend this practice say people may discover they have a serious disease (for example, cancer) from knowing the name; or that people might begin to practise medicine on their own if they became familiar with drug names. Some simply defend the practice because they feel it adds to the mystery of taking drugs.

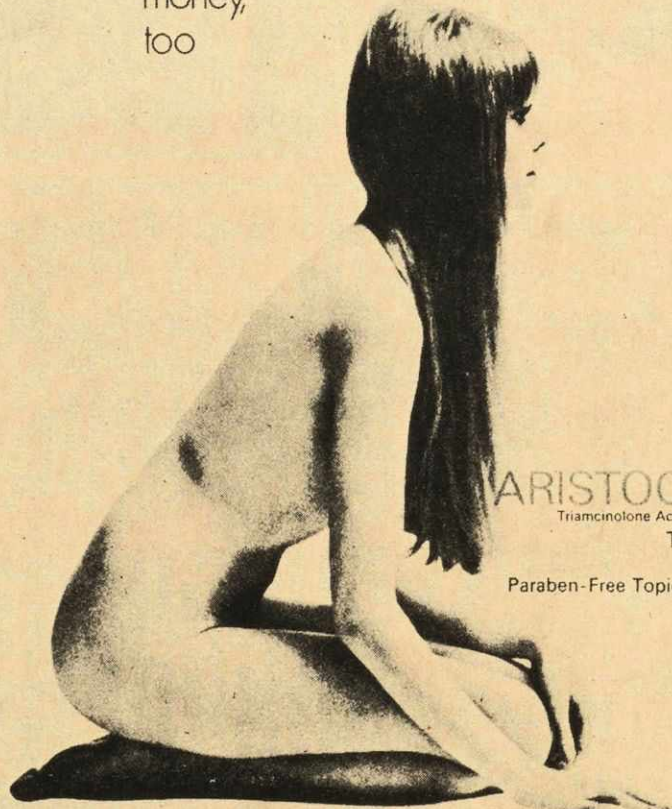
Automatic naming of the drug on the prescription bottle became law in Ontario with the passage of Bill 144 in June, 1972. The same bill required safety caps on prescription bottles.

In Quebec, there is no similar requirement with the result that the patient is at times put in a hazardous situation. Lack of the name on the label greatly hampers the work of poison control centres. It contributes to patients taking medication they may know they are allergic to. It also causes confusion when the patient is taking several different drugs over a long period of time. The physician as well is at a disadvantage, for he is often unaware of the drugs other physicians may have been prescribing for the same patient.

At the end of 1972, the federal Health Protection Branch sent to all Canadian physicians, pharmacists, hospitals, dentists, and veterinarians, a Canadian drug identification code.

How to save  
her skin  
and her  
money,  
too

The case for stricter  
government controls



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Some advertisements would appear better placed in Playboy magazine than in a supposedly respectable medical journal.

**Dr. Murray Katz,** a Montreal physician will lecture on

'Health Care and the Drug Industry in Canada' February 11, at 8 P.M.

in the McInnes Room, SUB All are invited to attend. FREE ADMISSION  
sponsored by

the Dalhousie Student Union and the Dalhousie Student Pharmacy Society

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