

STATE AND NATIONAL

Congress, drug manufacturers disagree about price changes

By Stephanie Greer
Staff Writer

Discussions between the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging and major U.S. pharmaceutical companies heated up recently when allegations surfaced that the companies had broken promises to keep costs of their products down.

"The elderly are having to choose between food, heat and medicine," said Andrea Boldon, press assistant for the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging.

Boldon, who stated that three-fourths of America's elderly paid for their prescriptions with money from their own pockets, said the top-30 pharmaceutical manufacturers in the United States had

been targeted in the committee's allegations.

In 1991, the U.S. Senate's Prescription Drug Cost Containment Act instructed the top-30 pharmaceutical manufacturers to keep the costs of their products at or below the rate of general inflation, Boldon said.

U.S. Sen. David Pryor, chairman of the Senate Committee on Aging, said the companies had not done so, Boldon said.

Boldon also said the Senate committee thought legislation was needed to help regulate the pharmaceutical industry.

"There are a number of studies and reports that show that pharmaceutical

companies cannot impose any kind of restraint on themselves," Boldon said.

Boldon said the committee found that prices for many pharmaceutical companies' products had exceeded the 1992 general inflation rate of 3 percent.

Glaxo Inc., a Research Triangle Park-based pharmaceutical manufacturer, was accused by the committee of increasing its prices by 4.4 percent during 1992, but Glaxo employees disagreed with the committee's statistics.

"If you look at the numbers, that's not the case," said Rick Sluder, senior manager of corporate communications at Glaxo Inc.

Sluder said the company kept its prices at an increase of only 1.8 percent

in 1992, well below the general inflation rate for the year.

"It is the desire of the company to set the record straight, and we will continue to make sure that facts are not misrepresented," Sluder said.

Sluder cited a study by the accounting firm Coopers & Lybrand that confirmed the figure and also said Glaxo Inc. "would continue to live up to the pricing pledge."

But Boldon said the Senate committee obtained its figures and statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Medispan Co., a provider of medical statistics.

"It's not like we're just pulling these numbers out of thin air," she said.

Sluder defended the increasing pharmaceutical costs, saying that more than 50 percent of Glaxo's business was subject to a discount of some sort.

"There are various opportunities for people to purchase drugs as outpatients from places that get a discount," he said.

Not all those in the medical field blame the price increases entirely on the pharmaceutical companies.

Rebecca Wilfinger, public information director of the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists, said she placed some of the blame on the U.S. Senate.

Wilfinger said that before the 1991 Prescription Drug Cost Containment Act, the Senate had passed provisions that allowed Medicaid recipients to re-

ceive the same discounts on pharmaceuticals as large buying groups. Instead of lowering prices overall, she said, the provisions eventually raised prices for everyone else.

"When you tinker with health care, you must tinker with what the whole machine does ... it's time to stop fooling with one piece," she said.

Wilfinger said that research by the ASHP had confirmed their assumptions but that the Senate had ignored the warnings of the group.

Wilfinger said she hoped that when the Senate committee finally decided on a course of action concerning the health-care crisis, it would "look at all parts of the equation."

Free speech an issue in magazine decision

By Adam Bianchi
Staff Writer

In a controversy many experts believe could have First Amendment implications, the publishers of Soldier of Fortune magazine recently lost their appeal in a suit brought against them concerning a man killed by an assassin who advertised in the publication.

In 1985, a Georgia man was murdered by a paid killer who had solicited business in the June 1985 classified section of the magazine.

A businessman paid the mercenary to kill his partner.

The gunman was arrested and convicted of murder in the case. The family of the murdered man sued Soldier of Fortune in an Alabama trial court and received a judgment of \$4.3 million in punitive damages against Omega Group Limited, the publisher of Soldier of Fortune.

Berrett Prettman, a lawyer who represented the Omega Group Limited, said the case represented an infringement of Soldier of Fortune's First Amendment right to free speech.

Prettman said he thought the case could create a legal precedent that might infringe on the rights of the advertising business. "The plaintiff's belief that the magazine had a responsibility to block advertisements that presented a public danger 'on their face (value) and without investigation' is too broad and too vague," he said. "This same rule could be applied to advertisements for cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption."

Lee Levine, a lawyer for publications such as Time magazine and the New Republic, wrote a legal brief about the case in which he stressed the rights of publishers to print what they wished.

"The Eleventh Circuit Court decision went far beyond previous corporate media law interpretation," he said.

If the ruling becomes precedent in its widest interpretation, Prettman said, newspapers and magazines would

have to "turn down all ads or risk heavy damages."

However, Prettman said he believed the case presented no real threat to publishers, calling it "a blip on the screen, not a general ruling."

Alan Caruba, an independent expert on legal issues concerning the media, said he agreed with the jury's decision against Soldier of Fortune.

Caruba said the First Amendment protection issue was "vastly overstated and not accurate in this case."

"The jury, when finding the publisher guilty of criminal negligence, made Soldier of Fortune culpable as an active participant in the crime. (The publishers) are responsible for all information printed. In this case the weapons' ad services were for the purpose of violence and were a public danger."

Levine said he believed the jury's decision had been caused by a point of semantics. "The term 'Gun for Hire' appeared at the head of the advertisement," he said. "The jury felt a public danger was presented by this term."

He also pointed out that in an earlier case involving the magazine, the jury ruled in the publication's favor. "In a very similar case two years earlier the jury concluded in favor of Soldier of Fortune," Levine said.

An anonymous spokesman for Omega Group Limited said an outside agreement in the case was probable.

"We are negotiating with the plaintiffs right now," the source said. "Obviously, we don't have \$4.3 million. We will probably reach some agreement separate from the court case."

The source stated the ruling was a "danger as we see it to anyone running personal ads and also to the fundamental right to free speech."

The source added that a wide variety of groups had disagreed with the decision. "The free-speech issue is the first time High Times, The Village Voice and the National Rifle Association ever agreed on anything."

Groups work to provide opportunities for minority youth

By Brad Williams
Staff Writer

In response to indications that young black, Hispanic and Native-American men face similar problems, a number of federal and independent groups are attempting to create opportunities for urban minority teenagers.

One such program, the Rockville, Md.-based Office of Minority Health, is involved in funding independent programs designed to improve the lives of these disadvantaged minority youth.

Blake Crawford, senior public affairs specialist with the Office of Minority Health, said, "the key to the minority male programs we have been funding is to tap the talent and energy of minority males."

Since it was founded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1990, the Office of Minority Health has given federal funds to 130 projects, Crawford said.

Eighteen of the programs funded by the group are long-term projects, Crawford said. The multiyear programs are given three-year grants worth \$250,000 to \$300,000 per year, and the funds can be renewed after three years.

The Dallas Urban League Institute, a program funded by the Office of Minority Health, focuses on building self-esteem and providing employment training for minority males, said Eric Anderson, the institute's director.

The organization also helps local high school dropouts earn their General Equivalency Diplomas, he said.

Anderson said he thought breakdowns in the nation's family structure and educational system were responsible for many problems facing young urban men.

He said many minority teenagers knew the educational system had failed them by the time they reached the 10th grade. He also said organizations like the Dallas Urban League Institute were often the only places they could turn to for support.

"There are no institutions in the country that deal with the problems of the minority male besides the Justice Department," Anderson said.

Anderson said that although organizations such as his had many successes, they still needed the help of churches, economic foundations and schools.

According to a study being conducted by Sonia Porey, senior policy analyst for the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights advocacy group, there is a high level of correlation between the problems experienced by disadvantaged Puerto Rican youths and those of disadvantaged black youths.

Porey, who is involved in the first year of a study of the lifestyles of Puerto Rican males between the ages of 16 and 24, said her research indicated that both groups had a high percentage rate of poverty, a large number of single moth-

ers and suffered from a general lack of parent involvement.

The assessment also indicated that opportunities for disadvantaged minority youths to attend college or gain employment were very limited.

Perez said she thought it was important for urban minority communities to be self-determined economically. "The strategy at the community level is to make the transition to economic stability," she said.

J.R. Cook, director of The United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc., said his organization attempted to develop leadership among young Native Americans.

The group sponsors the National

Unity Council, a gathering of Native Americans between the ages of 15 and 24, in which Native-American youths can voice their concerns about the status of their culture.

Cook said many problems faced Native Americans, including high rates of alcohol abuse, high suicide rates and deep poverty, but he went on to say he was impressed with today's generation of Native Americans.

"I have a great deal of confidence in this generation of Native-American youth ... confidence through sharing talent and working together in the spirit of unity," Cook said. "They will be able to make positive changes in economic and social conditions."

Uhlenberg

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cluding one who died not long after of lung failure.

"It was hard," Pam Uhlenberg said. "People have this idea that because we have so many kids, we have this removed relationship with them. But this was very real."

The other two children with handicaps are doing well now, she said.

The mother said raising adopted children of various ethnic backgrounds was not much different from raising other children, except when they reach adolescence, when they struggle to find their identities. "The hardest part is helping them figure out who they are."

Both Peter and Pam Uhlenberg said God was the main strength and support for their family.

"We feel God is caring for us and God is in control of things and he loves us," Peter Uhlenberg said.

But that doesn't mean it's not hard sometimes, Pam Uhlenberg said laugh-

ingly. "We're constantly challenged as parents."

Peter Uhlenberg said they also received much support from the community and their church.

The Uhlenbergs' biological children also support their parents' choice to adopt. "I've always been in support of what my parents have done," said Jeff Uhlenberg, a senior at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill.

Although the Uhlenbergs have no immediate intentions of adopting any more children, they are always open to the possibility. But for now, they are taking things one day at a time.

"Life is not boring," Pam Uhlenberg said. "This is a challenging world they're growing up in. We're just letting God show us the way."

Peter Uhlenberg added, "You experience a lot of highs and lows. We have a really meaningful relationship that is very satisfying."

Fraternities

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construction and demolition of houses in the historic districts first must be approved by the commission by filing a certificate of appropriateness.

"This is required to ensure that all the buildings in the historic district are in

harmony with each other.

The purpose of the Historic District Commission is to "promote, enhance and preserve the character and heritage of the historic district," according to the town's development ordinance.

BCC

from page 1

ere with the joint group's goal of proposing the best possible BCC.

"It's not the kind of thing you want this kind of project to go up or down over," he said. "I know the students have strong feelings about the Wilson site, but I hope we can negotiate as a group together."

The Wilson site could "comfortably" hold a building of at least 110,000 square feet, Rutherford said. He added that the size of the proposed BCC would probably fall somewhere closer to 50,000 square feet.

Eubanks said the final report to the BOT should include more than one site option for the BCC building.

McDonald said group members expected the matter to be before the BOT at their March 26 meeting. At the Black Student Movement candidates forum Wednesday night, BCC advocates estimated that the current BOT would vote 10-3 against the new center, including a

vote against the center by Student Body President John Moody.

Tim Smith, co-founder of the Black Awareness Council, said that if the BOT rejected the free-standing center, proponents of the center should "get ready for World War III."

Anna Griffin contributed to this story.

Bossio

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patients in Peru was underreported because many people cannot afford hospitalization and the military and police do not report AIDS cases.

Recycle

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lock said.

"It's hard to predict the future," he said. "It won't begin in the next six months."

Pollock said the only complaint from residents about the new plan was that newspapers now had to be placed in paper bags at the curb.

"Residents have been conscientiously not getting paper bags at the grocery store, and now we're asking them to use paper bags, and they're resisting," he said.

"When they wear out, residents can recycle them and get another one to use," he added.

Pollock said the change was made because it was dangerous for residents to lump all of their recyclables together.

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