

# Science and the News

## Dental Association: Toothpaste

### "Recognition" Subject of Controversy

The "recognition" that the American Dental Association afforded to the Procter & Gamble Co.'s Crest toothpaste 14 months ago has proved to be a boon for the company and a source of serious contention within the ADA. Last week in Philadelphia, at the ADA's 102nd annual convention, the controversy over "recognition" of Crest was renewed.

The ADA holds that "recognition" does not imply endorsement, but merely reflects the conclusion of the ADA's Council on Dental Therapeutics that Crest has provided "reasonable evidence of usefulness and of safety" in fighting tooth decay. The product contains stannous fluoride, which has been reported to prevent decay. Whatever the nuances in meaning between "endorsement" and "recognition," Procter & Gamble, without any impropriety, has benefited enormously from "recognition" by proclaiming it in its advertisements. Before "recognition" was issued in August 1960, Crest was third in national sales, with 12 percent of the annual \$235-million toothpaste market. It currently is second, with 26 percent of all toothpaste sales. The leader in sales remains the Colgate-Palmolive Co.'s Colgate dental cream, but since Crest received "recognition," Colgate has fallen from 33 to 27 percent. There is no doubt that with the promotional powers commanded by the major toothpaste producers, a word of approval from the ADA can be translated into a massive shift in customer preference.

Within the ADA, those supporting the granting of "recognition" to Crest have argued that it is the responsibility of the Association to lend its authority and prestige to products that are beneficial to the public; those opposed contend that the ADA is permitting itself

to be exploited for commercial purposes, and that the traditional wariness of medical and dental groups toward involvements with commercial enterprises is well founded. The opposition also argues that the medical and dental professions have inspired public confidence by remaining rigidly aloof from attempts to embroil them in sales campaigns.

At last week's ADA convention, the controversy was renewed when a group of delegates, including six past presidents of the Association, attempted to eliminate the ADA's "recognition" of Crest on the grounds that it was improper for the ADA to let its name be used in advertising outside of professional journals. Their proposal was defeated, 292 to 74, but was accompanied by approval of a resolution directing the Association's product review and evaluation council to "take all necessary" steps to eliminate misunderstandings about ADA statements on commercial products. Any conclusion that these actions had disposed of the "recognition" controversy was quickly laid to rest, however, by a three-way public relations fight that immediately ensued. The principals were the ADA, Procter & Gamble, and Colgate-Palmolive. Those delegates who had argued that the ADA was compromising its prestige by lending its name to popular advertising found themselves amply supplied with arguments for renewing the fight next year.

The latest episode to emanate from the Crest "recognition" occurred when Colgate, which is smarting from the sales benefits which have accrued to its competitor, reacted sharply to a tentative report introduced by the ADA's board of trustees. The report charged that Colgate advertising claims "have been consistently misleading," and added that Colgate "has downgraded its dental research program in the past few years." It also charged

that Colgate had attempted to influence ADA delegates to oppose the Crest "recognition," and it further accused Colgate "agents" of having arranged a press conference in June to generate publicity against the ADA "recognition" of Colgate's competitor. Colgate promptly denied this last charge and later issued a statement in which it said that "dental research at Colgate enjoys the highest priority and the budgets for such activity are at an all-time high." The company added that it would reply shortly to the charge of misleading advertising. It also praised the resolution that established the review of advertising use of ADA statements, and added: "it is obvious the House of Delegates . . . felt some policing action was necessary on Crest advertising. We feel this is a step in the right direction to protect the public."

The basic issue—whether professional societies should lend their names, and hence their prestige, to commercial products—is going to continue to disturb the ADA, quite appropriately, like a toothache. The good intention of letting the public know what is beneficial, in theory, balances properly against the loss of prestige that may result from the ADA being listed on toothpaste ads. But the frantic scramble for sales, the enormous market value attached to any sign of approval from a professional organization, and the ingenuity of corporate public relations add ingredients that perhaps were not included in the calculation that led to "recognition."

## Kefauver Drug Bill: Patent

### Provision Reviewed at Hearing

Senator Kefauver resumed hearings last week on the legislative prescription he has drafted for the drug industry. The hearings are part of a series that began in July for the purpose of collecting informed comment on the bill that the senator has prepared after nearly 2 years of investigation. That investigation has produced some 10,000 pages of testimony from which any thesis on the economics of the drug industry could be amply documented. It has led Kefauver to the conclusion that "by any test and under any standard, prices and profits in the ethical drug industry are excessive and unreasonable." This is a conclusion that the industry emphatically describes as false,