

Comment Komentaar

by Dr. George Davie



Market researchers are well-acquainted with what I will call the "partial response" phenomenon.

If a hundred questionnaires are sent out in the post, thirty at most will be returned. If the researchers have been brave enough to request repliers to divulge their names, this percentage drops to a maximum of 25%.

When a questionnaire is as demanding and intricate as that recently sent out to doctors about medical communications, one can safely assume that the resultant sample represents a very special category indeed.

First of all, the respondent may well have an uncharacteristic amount of leisure at his disposal. The average vigorously prescribing doctor has barely enough time to attend to his basic needs, let alone devote his attention to the problem of when last "excluding today" he referred to one of several

dozen publications, and which type of function (over the last 12 months) he found pleasant (on a scale of 1 — 7).

It is indisputable that some people enjoy filling out tortuous forms. Whether or not these ladies and gentlemen may safely be assumed to represent the habits and preferences of the medical fraternity is open to question.

Not only do I wish to take issue with the nature of the sample. Each questionnaire displays prominently the name, address and occupational details of every respondent. This is sometimes done so that replies will be undertaken in a serious spirit. (The "seriousness" of doctors is surely not being called into question by Marplan?)

Nevertheless, most of us would find it difficult to admit to never reading a publication, say, or harbouring venomous feelings towards all medical representatives, when

these attitudes sail under the flag of our own name . . .

However questionable the results of the Marplan "research" are, they will be taken seriously by publishers such as mine. We need a more immediate indication, then, of whether this magazine does enjoy a readership. I assume that, if you have read this editorial, you are one of those doctors who has little time for questionnaires. It will also represent considerable effort for you to address and send a postcard. Nevertheless, if you do read this magazine and glance at the advertisements, it would be immensely appreciated if you were to send a postcard to my publisher, Bill Hart, P.O. Box 27399, Sunnyside 0132, saying something simple, time-honoured and welcome like "I do".

Our readership could then be assessed, and our continued publication assured.