Government sets tranquilizer curbs

The government announced plans Wednesday to restrict distribution of Librium and Valium, the two most widely used tranquilizers, because of "grave concern" over abuses.

* * *

The Federal Drug Enforcement Administration said new rules would take effect in two to three months to put the two prescription drugs, both made by Hoffman-Laroche, Inc., under guidelines of the Controlled Substances Act.

Among other things, a person holding a doctor's prescription for either Librium or Valium would be allowed to get a maximum of five refills, with six months being the maximum life of the prescription.

John R. Bartles Jr., acting administrator of the drug agency, said the manufacturer had agreed not to contest the action in court although public hearings will be held.

* * *

Bartels said "There is grave concern" but little hard evidence about how much the drugs were being abused. Bartels said the restrictions were aimed at both overuse and diversion of the tranquilizers to the illicit market.

He said some people are known to gulp 30 to 40 of the pills a day rather than the three to four prescribed.

"Taking these pills is not like taking a glass of water," he said.

It is estimated that during the first six months of this year wholesale sales of the two drugs to pharmacies totalled $132 million. During that period, 39.6 million prescriptions of both drugs were issued.

In a letter to Dr. Charles C. Edwards, assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bartels asked that HEW make a scientific and medical evaluation of the abuse potential of the tranquilizers based on evidence gathered by his agency.

Bartels also asked that the drugs be placed under the act. If this action is taken, DEA will require records and reports of distribution and sales of the drugs. The schedule also requires tighter security of the drugs to guard against theft or diversion.

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Agnew was briefed on investigation

NEW YORK (UPI) — Vice President Spiro T. Agnew was briefed by Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson 10 days ago about the federal bribery and kickback investigation involving him, the New York Times reported Thursday.

* * *

The Times said Richardson told Agnew what the government's case consisted of so far, including testimony from more than 20 Maryland businessmen who have told prosecutors they gave cash to Agnew's associates for government contracts.

In addition, three of the Agnew associates told prosecutors they gave some of the payments to the Vice President Richarson told Agnew in the times' article.

* * *

The three were identified in the dispatch as Lester Matz, Jerome B. Wolff, and Allen I. Green.

SMatz told the government on one particular occasion, he gave Agnew $2,50p in 1971 for his help in getting some one a job in the General Services Administration, the Times said. Matz said the transaction took place in the presence of J. Walter Jones, a Maryland banker, but Jones denied it. He told the Times "Such a thing is ridiculous."

* * *

Investigators from U.S. Attorney George Beall's office began sifting through the vice president's personal records Thursday. In turning them over, Agnew also offered an interview with the probers.

* * *

Chief U.S. District Judge Edward Northrop announced that all federal judges in Maryland have disqualified themselves from the Agnew case.

* * *

Agnew's speech to the boilermakers union convention in Denver Wednesday night was very quietly received, contrary to the reaction he usually evokes.

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