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Item ID Number 01518

Author

Corporate Author

Report/Article Title Memorandum: from HQ USAF to AIC, with subject
Herbicide Orange Exposure, July 1979

Journal/Book Title

Year 0000

Month/Day

Color

Number of Images 2

Description Notes Memo provides a summary of herbicide use in Vietnam for physicians who may be treating patients with health complaints they believe are related to agent orange exposure.

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FM HQ USAF HOLLING AFB DC//SCES

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SUBJ: HERBICIDE ORANGE (HO) EXPOSURE

1. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED, THE FOLLOWING INFO SUMMARY AND GUIDANCE HAS BEEN PREPARED. PLEASE INSURE THAT ALL PHYSICIANS WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION ARE MADE AWARE OF THE FOLLOWING.

2. AS A RESULT OF RECENT TV, MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY ON HO ALL PHYSICIANS MAY BE ASKED BY THEIR PATIENTS TO RESPOND TO STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MEDIA AND TO INVESTIGATE SYMPTOMS DESCRIBED IN THE MEDIA PUBLICITY.

THE PROGRAMS AND ARTICLES AROSE AS A RESULT OF CLAIMS FILED WITH THE VA ALLEGING THAT CURRENT HEALTH COMPLAINTS AND PHYSICAL DISORDERS ARE RELATED TO EXPOSURE TO HO. THE FOLLOWING INFO IS INTENDED TO AID THE PHYSICIAN IN MANAGING ACTIVE DUTY/RETIRED PATIENTS WHO ASK QUESTIONS CONCERNING HO OR ALLEGE SYMPTOMS FROM PREVIOUS EXPOSURES:

A. HERBICIDE ORANGE (FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO BY THE MEDIA AS AGENT ORANGE) WAS A 50:50 MIXTURE OF TWO CHLOROPHENXY HERBICIDES: 2,4,5-TRICHLOROPHENXYACETIC ACID (2,4,5-T), AND 2,4-

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DICHLOROPHENXYACETIC ACID (2,4-D). HO WAS USED EXTENSIVELY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM 1962 TO 1970 TO DEFOLIATE JUNGLE VEGETATION, LIMIT THE RISKS OF AMBUSH, AND DEPRIVE THE ENEMY OF A REFUGE.

MILITARY PERSONNEL MOST LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED WERE THOSE INVOLVED IN HERBICIDE HANDLING AND SPRAYING OPERATIONS. WHILE OTHER HERBICIDE FORMULATIONS WERE USED DURING THE EARLY PHASES OF OUR VIETNAM INVOLVEMENT, HO AND ITS 2,4,5-T ACCOUNTED FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE DEFOLIANTS DISSEMINATED IN VIETNAM.

B. A TOXIC CONTAMINANT (2,3,7,8-TCDF) IS PRESENT IN THE 2,4,5-T COMPONENT OF HO AS A RESULT OF THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS. THE DIOXIN WAS PRESENT IN PARTS PER MILLION AMOUNTS AND IT IS THIS COMPOUND THAT IS THEORIZED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHRONIC ADVERSE HEALTH EFFECTS ATTRIBUTED TO EXPOSURES TO HO.

THE 2,4-D AND 2,4,5-T ARE RELATIVELY FREE OF ACUTE AND CHRONIC EFFECTS EXCEPT WITH VERY HIGH DOSE EXPOSURES.

C. MUSCULAR PAIN, HEPATOTOXICITY, PORPHYRIA CUTANEA TARDIA, NEPHROTOXICITY, PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY AND CONSTITUTIONAL SYMPTOMS SUCH AN ANOREXIA, FATIGUE, LACK OF VIGOR, DEPRESSION AND LOSS OF LIBIDO HAVE BEEN CLAIMED TO OCCUR FROM DIOXIN EXPOSURE.

HOWEVER, THE ONLY LONG-TERM EFFECT POSITIVELY ASSOCIATED WITH DIOXIN EXPOSURES IS CHLORACNE, AN ACNEIFORM RASH OFTEN ACCOMP-

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 NEEDED BY HYPERSENSITIZATION. AT THIS TIME THERE IS NO SUBSTANTIATED
 EVIDENCE OF CARCINOGENICITY, TERATOGENICITY, EFFICACY OR MUTAGENICITY
 IN HUMANS DUE TO DIOXIN EXPOSURE. NOTWITHSTANDING, THE ENVIRON-
 MENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY HAS RECENTLY SUSPENDED THE USE OF 2,4,5-T
 FOR ALL AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES. 2. A COMPREHENSIVE EPIDEMIOLOGIC
 STUDY INVOLVING FORMER OPERATION RANCH HAND PERSONNEL IS BEING
 DEVELOPED. RANCH HAND WAS THE OPERATION THAT CONDUCTED THE AERIAL
 SPRAYING OF THE HERBICIDES. IF THESE INDIVIDUALS PRESENT THEMSELVES
 AT YOUR MEDICAL FACILITY, PLEASE FORWARD THEIR NAMES AND CURRENT
 ADDRESSES TO THE EPIDEMIOLOGY DIVISION AT USAF SCHOOL OF AEROSPACE
 MEDICINE, BROOKS AFB TX 78235. TO FACILITATE COMPLETE IDENTIFICATION
 OF FORMER RANCH HAND PERSONNEL. ALL PATIENTS CONCERNED ABOUT PREVI-
 OUS HERBICIDE EXPOSURES SHOULD BE REASSURED THAT EXTENSIVE EFFORTS
 WILL BE MADE TO FULLY EVALUATE ALL POTENTIAL HEALTH EFFECTS ARISING
 FROM THE AF USE OF HERBICIDES. ANY PATIENTS REPORTING SYMPTOMS
 SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY EVALUATED BY THEIR PHYSICIANS TO IDENTIFY
 ETIOLOGIES FOR THEIR SYMPTOMS, AND APPROPRIATE THERAPY SHOULD BE
 ADMINISTERED. SOUND MEDICAL JUDGMENT SHOULD BE USED WHEN DISCUSSING
 PROBLEMS WITH THESE INDIVIDUALS TO AVOID INSERTING BIAS INTO THE PRO-
 POSSED EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDY. IN ADDITION, DISCUSSIONS WITH PATIENTS

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 SHOULD BE SYMPATHETIC BUT NEUTRAL ON WHETHER THEIR SYMPTOMS HAVE BEEN
 CAUSED BY EXPOSURE TO HC. SUCH A CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP
 REMAINS SCIENTIFICALLY UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME. 3. FURTHER INFO. IF
 NEEDED, MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING CAPT MICHAEL SUPI, USAF, MC
 OR LT COL WILLIAM H. WOLFE, USAF, MC, AT THE USAF SCHOOL OF AEROS-
 PACE MEDICINE, EPIDEMIOLOGY DIV, BROOKS AFB TX 78235. AUTOVON
 440-3471, COMMERCIAL AC 512 536-3471.

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