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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE VACO STEERING COMMITTEE
ON HERBICIDE TOXICITY

JANUARY 29, 1980

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:15 AM.
2. A copy of the meeting's agenda and of the participants is attached. The items were discussed in the order listed in the agenda.
3. Development of a series of educational films on Agent Orange (A/O). These films will be concerned with assisting the professional staffs of our VA health care facilities to better examine Vietnam era veterans for potential A/O toxicity. These films are to be made by the St. Louis RMEC in consultation with leading experts in herbicide toxicology from other federal agencies and from the private sector. Work on the films will commence in February 1980.
4. Briefing of the Chicago-Area VA Medical Centers and Regional Office on Agent Orange.

The Administrator has requested that a team from VACO visit the Regional Office and the four VAMCs in the Chicago area and provide a comprehensive briefing on methods for examining veterans for possible A/O toxicity and for processing their claims for compensation. The briefings, which are scheduled to occur in the second week of February 1980 will cover the following aspects: "basic" knowledge about A/O effects on human health; procedures for optimal medical examinations for possible herbicide toxicity; methods of processing examination records; methods for processing claims for compensation; and approaches to providing correct information on A/O to veterans and the general public.

5. A Summary of the Administrator's Trip to California on January 25-26, 1980 was presented. The Administrator, accompanied by VACO staff members, accomplished three purposes during this trip: (1) he dedicated the Psychological Readjustment Counselling Center in Van Nuys, California; (2) he engaged in an open discussion with Vietnam era veterans and others on A/O issues; and (3) he appeared at Senator Cranston's hearing on A/O at Patriotic Hall. In general, the discussions with the veterans and others on A/O was felt to be constructive and to have resolved some issues currently causing a high level of concern about the VA's role in attempting to define effects of A/O on human health.

6. VA's Involvement in the Suit Against the Chemical Companies that Manufactured Agent Orange.

The chemical companies which manufactured A/O are the subject of a class action suit by several groups of Vietnam era veterans on the grounds of alleged toxic damage from A/O. The chemical companies have, in turn, filed suit against the VA and other federal agencies claiming that the federal government is responsible, due to negligence, for any adverse human health effects resulting from the use of A/O in Vietnam. As a result of this latter suit, the VA has been required by the court to identify the number of a series of documents relevant to A/O and to estimate the time required for making them available for the court. This process is now underway.

7. VA's Pilot Study of Dioxin Levels in Fat Biopsies.

Dr. Gross' laboratory has completed the analyses and validation of all 34 biopsy specimens submitted (i.e., 20 exposed veterans, 3 Ranch Hand participants, and 11 controls). The "final" results of these analyses will be announced when all of the necessary correlative background data on each of the study participants has been collected. The EPA is also proceeding with its analysis of the same specimens by an alternative method to that used by Dr. Gross, but the date by which these analyses will be completed is not yet certain.

It is planned to ultimately prepare two scientific papers covering the results of the study and to submit them to appropriate journals for publication. One paper will deal with basic toxicology and the other with the clinical correlates of the study.

8. VA's Epidemiological Study of Agent Orange.

This study, which is mandated by P.L. 96-151, will be designed by an epidemiologist who is not a federal employee. This epidemiologist will be selected on the basis of an open bidding process, the details of which will be announced in the Commerce Business Daily, and at a special symposium presented by the VA for all interested prospective bidders.

The contracting epidemiologist will also be requested to provide the analysis of the data. However, the data collection for the study will occur in selected VAMC's under the direction of specially trained physicians.

The tentative date for finalization of the study design is June 1980.

9. VA's A/O Registry.

The VA program for examination of Vietnam era veterans under Circular 10-79-83 for possible A/O toxicity continues. The precise number examined as of now is not known for certain since the field stations are coding the examinations performed since November 1, 1979. However, we have completed the coding of some 4,000 of those completed before November 1980. An analysis of the medical records prepared on these veterans will be available for the Administrator's testimony on A/O before Congress in February 1980. This analysis will emphasize the "central tendencies" (i.e., mean, median, range) of the data accumulated.

10. VA Advisory Committee on the Toxic Effects of Herbicides.

The minutes of the Committee's third meeting (held in December 1979) are now being corrected for transcription errors and will be available shortly for distribution.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in March or April 1980. The precise date will be announced in the near future.

11. Administrator's Testimony to Congress on A/O.

The Administrator has agreed to provide testimony to both Houses of Congress on the VA's accomplishments and future plans with regard to A/O. This testimony is scheduled for February 25, 1980. The Steering Committee will be preparing materials to present to the Administrator's for possible consideration for inclusion in the briefing.

12. A/O Claims Activity.

As of January 1980, 1,049 claims for A/O compensation had been received by DVB. Thus far, two of these have been adjudicated as due to A/O exposure and 18 have been given compensation for conditions not related to A/O.

13. AFIP Registry. 18 cases were received by the Registry in 1979. As of now, the total has risen to 30.

14. Educational Literature for Veterans on A/O.

The Committee agreed to develop literature which can be handed to veterans interested in the health-related effects of A/O. This literature will stress the factual information that has been reported in the scientific literature and will seek to disseminate the established facts on A/O effects on human health.

15. The meeting adjourned at 11 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.

Attachments:

Agenda

List of Participants

VACO AGENT ORANGE STEERING COMMITTEE ON HERBICIDE TOXICITY

Agenda for the

Meeting of January 29, 1980

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
1. Trips to St. Louis and Chicago	Dr. Richard A. Levinson
2. Administrator's California Trip	Dr. Paul A. L. Haber
3. Fat Biopsy Study	Dr. Lawrence Hobson and Dr. Lyndon E. Lee
4. Epidemiological Study of Agent Orange (P.L. 96-151)	Dr. Lawrence Hobson
5. Agent Orange Literature Review (P.L. 96-151)	Dr. Richard A. Levinson
6. VA Involvement in Suit Against Agent Orange Chemical Companies	Mr. Fred Conway
7. Agent Orange Registry	Ms. Margaret Kilduff and Dr. Richard A. Levinson
8. Advisory Committee	Dr. John Castellot, Sr. and Dr. Gerrit Schepers
9. Administrator's Testimony on Agent Orange before Congress	Dr. Paul A. L. Haber
10. Agent Orange Claims Activities	Mr. J. C. Peckarsky
11. Administrator's Monthly Report on Agent Orange	Mr. Alex Kutner

List of Participants

Meeting of the VA Agent Orange Steering Committee

January 29, 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>
1. Mr. Strat Appleman	Information Service (063)
2. Dr. John Castellot, Sr.	Medical Service (111)
3. Mr. Fred Conway	General Counsel (023C)
4. Dr. Paul Haber	Professional Services (11)
5. Dr. Laurence Hobson	Research & Development (15A)
6. Ms. Margaret Kilduff	Medical Administration (136D)
7. Mr. Alex Kutner	Professional Services (11H)
8. Ms. Majorie Lamoreux	Management Services (60)
9. Dr. Lyndon Lee	VAMC-Washington, D.C.
10. Dr. Richard Levinson	Professional Services (11B)
11. Dr. Paul Le Golvan	Pathology Service (113)
12. Mr. J. C. Peckarsky	Department of Veterans Benefits (21)
13. Mr. Dean Phillips	Administrator's Office (00A3)
14. Dr. John Walsh	DM&S Operations (10B1A)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE VACO STEERING COMMITTEE
ON HERBICIDE TOXICITY

MARCH 6, 1980

1. The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.
2. The meeting participants are listed in the Appendix.
3. The first topic discussed was the new program of briefings to be presented to the VA field by teams from VACO. The first trip was made to the VAMCs' and the VARO in the Chicago area on March 4-5, 1980. The individuals involved in this briefing included representatives from DM&S Professional Services and Medical Administration Service, DVB, and Information Service. Team members discussed with key staff members from each facility the following topics: (1) the use of herbicides during the Vietnam War; (2) the pharmacology and toxicology of phenoxy herbicides and dioxins in animals and man; (3) VA programs, clinical and scientific, related to Herbicide Orange (HO); (4) the administrative aspects of VA's HO programs; (5) VA's experience with claims for compensation related to HO; and (6) the public relations aspects of the HO issue. Following the briefing, there was a discussion of a broad range of HO related topics between the briefing team members and the staff of the VA facilities.
4. The next topic discussed was VACO's new efforts to encourage a more productive dialogue with the field on HO. The following activities are being initiated to help assure this: (1) formation of an HO committee at each VAMC to serve as a coordinating group for the facility's HO activities; (2) a monthly HO "hotline" call from VACO to the VAMC's and VAOPC's. (3) the development of additional educational materials on HO for VA staff and for veterans, including films and written materials. (4) another major educational conference for VA and environmental health physicians.
5. The progress in preparation of the RFP's for the HO epidemiological study and the literature review mandated under PL 96-151 was reviewed. The RFP's for both projects should be available for advertisement and distribution in the near future.
6. The rest of the meeting was dedicated to a review of the contents of an educational pamphlet on HO intended for distribution to Vietnam veterans.
7. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.

Appendix - Participation List

Appendix

MEMBERS VACO STEERING COMMITTEE ON HERBICIDE TOXICITY

March 6, 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
Mr. Stratton Appleman	Director for News and Liaison Information Service (06)
John Castellot, M.D.	Director, Medical Service (111)
Mr. Fred Conway	Attorney, General Counsel's Office (023D)
Mrs. Gene Dospil	Publications (036A)
Mr. Layne Drash	Staff Assistant, Professional Services (11)
Paul A. L. Haber, M.D.	ACMD for Professional Services (11)
Lawrence Hobson, M.D.	Deputy ACMD for Research and Development (15A)
Mr. Alex Kutner	Staff Assistant, Professional Services (11)
Mr. Burt Lair	General Counsel (02)
Lyndon E. Lee, M.D.	Surgical Service, VAMC Washington, DC
Paul LeGolvan, M.D.	Deputy Director, Pathology Service (113)
Richard A. Levinson, M.D.	Deputy ACMD for Professional Services (11B)
Robert Love, M.D.	Deputy Director, Evaluation & Analysis Office (10B3)
Mr. J. C. Peckarsky	Director, Compensation & Pension Service (21)
Mr. Dean Phillips	Special Asst. to the Administrator (00A3)
Mr. Bill Sawchack	Information Services (063)
Gerrit Schepers, M.D.	Medical Service (111)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE VACO STEERING COMMITTEE
ON HERBICIDE TOXICITY

APRIL 14, 1980

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM.
2. The list of participants in the meeting is attached.
3. The first topic discussed was the naming of a new Agent Orange team in DM&S. Dr. Barclay Shepard is to be the leader of this team. He will be assisted by Mr. Layne Drash, Program Analyst, and Mrs. Theresa Obert, Technical Assistant. With the activation of this new team, Dr. Haber and Dr. Levinson will discontinue their role in the Agent Orange program.
4. As part of his new responsibilities, Dr. Shepard will become the Chairman of the VACO Agent Orange Steering Committee.
5. The agenda for the next Advisory Committee Meeting was discussed. This meeting will be held on April 23, 1980, between 8:30 and 11:30 AM in VA Central Office. Members of the Steering Committee are scheduled to make a summary of their activities between 10:15 - 11:00 AM.
6. The meeting of the Chloracne Task Force was held on April 14, 1980. The purpose of this meeting was to define the diagnostic criteria for chloracne and to develop an approach for the medical evaluation of Vietnam veterans who might manifest it. The conclusions reached by the Task Force will be presented to the Steering Committee at a future meeting.
7. The pre-bid conference for potential contractors for the Agent Orange epidemiological study was held on April 11, 1980. Approximately 12 potential bidders attended the conference, and several of them expressed significant interest in the study.
8. The prospectus for the Agent Orange literature review is still being circulated for approval through VACO. It is anticipated that the project will be ready for advertisement in the "Commerce Business Daily" by April 30, 1980.
9. Progress in planning the Agent Orange educational conference was reviewed. The conference will be held in Silver Spring, Md., on May 28-30, 1980. The audience will be composed of VA "environmental health physicians" and VA Regional Office personnel. A list of the potential agenda topics was presented.

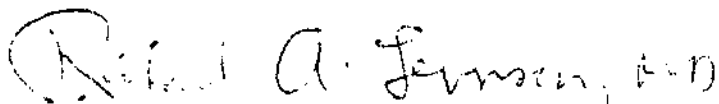
Considering the importance of this conference, the Committee voted unanimously to request that they be given the opportunity to approve the contents of the agenda prior to its finalization.

10. Progress was reported on the computerization of the data from the Agent Orange Registry. The design for the scope of the reports to be generated from this data is currently being designed in conjunction with the Computerized Medical Systems Office.
11. Efforts to prepare an informational pamphlet on Agent Orange for veterans is underway. The VACO Information Service is coordinating this effort.
12. The AFIP Agent Orange Tissue Registry now has pathological material from 38 patients. All of this material was submitted by VA hospitals.
13. The journal articles reporting on the VA's study on dioxin levels in human fat biopsies are being prepared. Two articles will be submitted, one on the chemical methodology utilized and the other on the clinical implications of the procedure. Both papers will be reviewed by several outside scientific panels before their submission to the journals.
14. The script for the informational film on Agent Orange for veterans being prepared by the St. Louis RMEC has been received by VACO for review.

The Steering Committee voted unanimously to request that it be permitted to review and comment on the script prior to its being finalized.

15. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.

Attachment

ROSTER OF PARTICIPANTS
VACO AGENT ORANGE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
April 14, 1980

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>
Mr. Fred Conway	Attorney, General Counsel's Office (023D)
Mr. Layne Drash	Staff Assistant, Professional Services (11)
Lawrence Hobson, M.D.	Deputy ACMD for Research and Development (15A)
Mr. Alex Kutner	Staff Assistant, Professional Services
Ms. Marjorie Leandri	Management Services (63)
Dr. Lyndon Lee	Surgical Service, VAMC Washington, D.C.
Paul LeGolvan, M.D.	Deputy Director, Pathology Service (113)
Richard A. Levinson, M.D.	Deputy ACMD for Professional Services
Mr. J. C. Peckarsky	Director, Compensation & Pension Service (21)
Mr. Dean Phillips	Special Asst. to the Administrator (00A3)