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Item ID Number 05580

Not Scanned

Author

Corporate Author Science Panel, Agent Orange Working Group

Report/Article Title Minutes of the Science Panel, Agent Orange Working Group, October 20 and 21, 1981

Journal/Book Title

Year 0000

Month/Day

Color

Number of Images 0

Description Notes

MINUTES OF THE SCIENCE PANEL

AGENT ORANGE WORKING GROUP

The Science Panel met at 9:30 a.m. on October 20 And 22, 1981. The list of those attending is appended (Tab A).

Agent Orange Registry of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (ACIP)

Dr. Bricker presented to the panel a brief preliminary report on the Agent Orange Registry of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology containing biopsy and autopsy material on 408 veterans submitted to the AFIP as having Vietnam service. Thirty-eight percent of the specimens submitted were of skin and subcutaneous tissues. The report which is very preliminary is attached (Tab B).

Other Groups Exposed

1. The Panel was provided an update on the so-called aborted missions. After discussion, the Chair requested that Mr. Christian develop the details and present to the Panel only those that involve TCDD containing agents that substantial numbers of personnel were exposed. Drs. Honchar and Kimbrough will continue to determine if population groups who were heavily exposed by any of these incidents can be developed.
2. After the decision to terminate the use of phenoxy herbicides in Vietnam, approximately 25,000 55-gallon drums from Johnson Island and 15,000 55-gallon drums from Biloxi, Mississippi, were incinerated at sea in operations referred to as PACER HO and PACER IVY. Major Young showed slides of the operations. Approximately 150 military personnel were involved. These names reside in the same location as the names for Project RANCH HAND. About 100 civilians were involved whose names may or may not be available but there are no addresses.
3. Major Brown presented to the Panel a listing of 2,4,5-T herbicide agents available through the GSA catalogue during the 1960's and 1970's. These would be available through normal procurement and would likely be used in non RANCH HAND operations. They were also available for use by Federal agencies in the United States, such as the Corps of Engineers spraying of waterways in the southern United States.

Other Proposals and Studies

1. Cytotoxicity of Agent Orange by University of North Dakota

Robert H. Lenham, Special Projects Officer of the Disabled American Veterans, transmitted the proposal to Dr. Peter Beach of HHS. The Chair asked for a special review by cytogeneticists. That review and proposal (Tab C) were provided to the Panel. If individual Panel members have no specific comments, that review will be provided back to Mr. Lenham by November 10, 1981.

2. Cartographic Data Base Preparation of the VA from Department of Health and Social Services, State of Washington

Dr. Shepard requested that the Science Panel review the proposal from the State of Wisconsin Agent Orange Identification and Assistance Program submitted to the VA (Tab D). The Chair asked for specific comments by November 20. The comments will be coordinated and recirculated to the members and then submitted to the VA.

3. VA Protocol for Epidemiological Studies of Agent Orange

The Science Panel completed its review of this document and transmitted the review to the VA (Tab E). A summary is as follows:

"Basically, the Science Panel had difficulty in providing a meaningful review because the document was not a protocol. Instead it appeared to consist of three parts. The first 19 pages were primarily an introduction. The second 65 pages represented a discussion of the difficulties normally faced in epidemiological studies, and the rest of the document was a literature review covering 141 pages. Every member expressed concern about the lack of details to the point that it was not possible to constructively review the proposal.

"The final conclusion was that the present proposal is inadequate and the Science Panel recommends to the VA that a course of action be developed that will not cause any further unnecessary delays in attempting to answer questions about health issues in Vietnam veterans. A specific protocol should be developed."

4. Analysis of 2,3,7,8 - Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin in Adipose Tissue from Vietnam Veterans by Michael L. Gross, Jackson O. Lay, Philip A. Lyon, Dixie Lippstreu, and Nancy Kangas, University of Nebraska, and Robert L. Harless and Aubry E. Dupuy, Jr., EPA

This paper by Gross, et al, was provided by the VA to the Panel. Dr. Hobson felt that the conclusion reached could not be substantiated by the data given in the paper. It was decided to call a special meeting of the Science Panel on October 22 to review this paper. At the second meeting, all members present except one felt that this paper should not be presented to the Dioxin Symposium on October 25-29 in its present form. The paper reached conclusions that were not supported by the data presented by Dr. Gross to the Science Panel. Though the conclusions may be valid if supported by other data Dr. Gross may have, they cannot be arrived at from the presented paper. Dr. Barnes of EPA was to contact Dr. Gross and to suggest that the conclusions reached were not supported by the data presented in the paper. Dr. Barnes provided the Panel base data tables (Tab G). Some of these data had been critically reviewed previously by the seven ad hoc reviewers

selected by the Science Panel and reported back to the VA on May 29, 1980 (Tab H). Dr. Barnes subsequently reported to the Chair that he spoke with Dr. Gross and that Dr. Gross did not intend to present the conclusions as stated. The details of these analyses need careful review by the Science Panel in the near future.

5. A Statistical Description of Data from the Veterans Administration Computerized Registry of Agent Orange Examinations Based on Information Available through February 10, 1981

Dr. Page presented a preliminary analysis of the individuals on the VA Agent Orange Registry (Tab I). It was emphasized that this represents a self-selected group who were concerned and for whom there is no acceptable control group to make comparisons. Nonetheless, nearly 40 percent of symptoms attributed by the veterans to Agent Orange exposure were skin rashes. These preliminary data do not support that the number, types, or locations of malignant neoplasms in the 19,082 cases analyzed are different from one would expect in a population of this age.

6. VA Mortality Study

Dr. Page described a paper he is presenting to the American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting in Los Angeles in November. The study would use the VA's Beneficiaries Identification and Records Location Systems (BIRLS) and match against other data. At best, the system will indicate service in Southeast Asia and not Vietnam and that the BIRLS has information about branch of service from only about 75 percent of the veterans; therefore, it may be difficult to determine whether the veteran was a ground troop or not.

Several members of the Panel expressed surprise that this study has begun without the protocol being reviewed or known about in any detail by the Panel. Dr. Shepard was asked to make the protocol available to the Science Panel at the earliest possible date. The analysis may have difficulties with which the Science Panel must be familiar.

Other Business

1. Dr. Shepard made available to the Science Panel the VA review of the literature (Tab J).
2. J. E. Davies, Chairman, Industry Task force on 2,4-D Research Data, advised the Panel of their existence and provided guidelines for their operation (Tab K).
3. Mr. Walter M. Shaub, Chemical Kinetics Division, Center for Chemical Physics, National Bureau of Standards, informed Mr. Platt of their work in the destruction of toxic materials, including virtually all pesticides and herbicides (Tabs L1 and L2). The Science Panel will arrange for a presentation shortly in addition to reviewing written communications.

4. Considerable discussion centered around developing cohort groups for study. One comment was to study combat personnel, noncombat personnel in Vietnam, and personnel from the Vietnam era but who had not served in Vietnam before and after herbicides were extensively used. Dr. Gough and Ms. Gelband communicated with the Chair on October 21 about this concept of a wider sharing of information and concern about the two VA presentations described above (Tab M).

The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 1981, Room 303-305A Humphrey Building, to further discuss these items.

SCIENCE PANEL
AGENT ORANGE WORKING GROUP

October 20, 1981

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