

MINUTES OF THE VACO AD HOC STEERING COMMITTEE ON THE  
HEALTH RELATED EFFECTS OF HERBICIDES

JULY 3, 1978

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.
2. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and accepted.
3. Five questions which the Committee wishes to pose to the Advisory Committee on Herbicides were finalized. These questions will be presented to them at their next meeting.
4. The Committee reviewed the proposed Circular on the evaluation of veterans claiming toxic effects from exposure to herbicides in Vietnam. The revision of this Circular prepared on the basis of the Committee members' comments, is attached.
5. Drs. Williams and LeGolván presented their recommendations on the choice of a laboratory for testing dioxin levels in fat samples. They suggested that the VA utilize the services of Dr. Michael Gross of the University of Nebraska, Department of Chemistry. Dr. Gross is apparently willing to analyze the number of samples which the VA is likely to generate within the next year. It appears that the payment for Dr. Gross' analyses can be best covered by a contract.

6. The Committee engaged in a lengthy discussion concerning the precise role of fat dioxin levels in the diagnosis of toxic effects of herbicides. No consensus was reached on this matter, since the membership was divided on the value of the test in Vietnam veterans. The two major positions which were discussed were as follows:

a. The half-life of dioxin in fat is relatively short, and any dioxin found in the fat of Vietnam veterans at this time could not have been obtained during the Vietnam War. Accordingly, performance of fat dioxin level analyses should be regarded as experimental rather than diagnostic.

b. The absence of dioxin in a veteran's fat tissues have a specific diagnostic importance since it would cast doubt about the etiological role of dioxin in any specific illness that the involved veteran might be manifesting. Accordingly, fat dioxin levels should be determined in Vietnam veterans with illnesses which might be attributed to herbicide exposure.

7. Ms. Kilduff informed the Committee that VACO Medical Administration Service was involved in an effort to develop a registry for veterans claiming herbicide toxicity. She will report on the progress achieved in this area at subsequent Committee meetings.

8. Discussion of research findings on human herbicide toxicity and on obtaining lists from DOD of servicemen potentially exposed to toxic herbicides in Vietnam will be deferred until after the first meeting of the Advisory

Committee. The purpose of this delay is to allow us to benefit from the discussion of these topics by the experts from outside agencies who will be present at the Advisory Committee meeting.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Att.