

MINUTES OF THE VACO AD HOC STEERING COMMITTEE
ON THE TOXIC EFFECTS OF HERBICIDES
August 14, 1978

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. The group in attendance is listed in Appendix 1.

2. Goals for VA Activities on Toxic Herbicides. The first order of business was the formulation of the goals for the VA's approach to the detection, evaluation and treatment of veterans with possible health-related effects of herbicides. A listing of these goals is provided in Appendix 2.

3. Research into Herbicide Effects. The status of research into the toxic effects of herbicides was discussed. It was pointed out that the Air Force has produced a very comprehensive review of the available research reports, and that this review will be issued shortly. Formal efforts will be made to obtain this report as soon as it is released.

4. Study on Fat Dioxin Levels.

a. Dr. Hobson summarized his protocol dealing with the controlled prospective study of dioxin levels in human body fat. It is anticipated that the analyses of the dioxin levels will be performed by Dr. Gross' laboratory at the University of Nebraska. Preliminary estimates suggest that the study might be complete in six months.

b. A copy of the protocol will be provided by Dr. Hobson in the near future.

5. VA Circular on Examination of Veterans Claiming Herbicide Toxicity. This Circular is in the final stages of the sign-off process and should be ready for issuance within the next two weeks.

6. Central Herbicide Registry. The progress attained towards developing this Registry was reviewed by Ms. Kilduf. It is anticipated that the Registry could be fully operative within the next few months.

7. Medical Review of Toxicity Claims.

a. A panel of physicians will be constituted for the purpose of evaluating the medical records of all veterans who were examined for potential herbicide toxicity at a VAHCF.

b. The purpose behind these reviews will be to inform VACO on the appropriateness of the examination procedures being utilized and to call attention to any medical findings that bear further investigation.

c. Dr. Levinson was assigned responsibility for activating the panel.

8. AFIP Tissue Registry. Dr. Williams announced the development of an agreement with AFIP to collect and store tissues from veterans who were exposed to herbicides during the Vietnam war. These tissue specimens (i.e. obtained from surgical procedures and autopsies) would be retained indefinitely so as to be available for study when required. Dr. Williams will undertake the preparation of a relevant circular on this matter.

9. Maps of the Areas Sprayed with Herbicides During the Vietnam War. These maps which would be of significant benefit in the adjudication of herbicide-related claims, are available from NAS. Mr. Peckarsky was requested to obtain them for VA use.

10. Further Research on Herbicides.

a. It was agreed that high priority should be given to the careful follow-up of individuals exposed to large doses of potentially toxic herbicides in natural disasters. The incidents at Seveso, Italy and Nitro, West Virginia are examples.

b. The Committee concluded that the VA did not have the expertise which would allow it to take a major role in such investigations but that it should induce other federal agencies to do so.

c. Accordingly, Dr. Schepers was requested to discover at the next meeting of the Advisory Committee which agencies are best equipped to undertake the investigation of each of the natural disasters and to report this information to the Steering Committee at its next meeting.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard A. Levinson, M.D.

RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.

Membership Health-Related Effects of Herbicides of the VACO
Ad Hoc Steering Committee on the Health-Related Effects of
Herbicides

1. Dr. Lawrence Hobson, Deputy ACMD
for Research and Development
2. Dr. Paul LeGolvan, Deputy Director
Pathology Service
3. Miss Margaret Kilduff, Chief, Medical
Records Program Staff
4. Dr. Richard A. Levinson, Deputy ACMD
for Professional Services
(Committee Chairman)
5. Dr. Robert Love, Director, Operationst
Review and Analysis Staff
6. Mr. J.C. Peckarsky, Director,
Compensation and Pension Service
7. Dr. Gerrit Schepers, Program Chief
for Cardiopulmonary Diseases (111)

VA GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
ON HEALTH RELATED EFFECTS OF HERBICIDES

- * Identify all veterans manifesting disabling persistent adverse health effects to herbicides
- * Initiate medical follow up on all cases claiming exposure
- * Develop and promulgate criteria for adjudication of claims
- * Foster epidemiological investigations of persons exposed to herbicides through industrial accidents
- * Review past and current research on the toxicology of herbicides for animals and man
- * Stimulate research on aspects of toxicology where clear answers are not yet available
- * Educate health care facility staff regarding toxicological issues relating to herbicides
- * Monitor management of individual case investigations by health care facility staff