

107-10770

MINUTES OF THE VACO AD HOC STEERING COMMITTEE  
ON THE TOXIC EFFECTS OF HERBICIDES

October 10, 1978

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M.
2. VA Circular 10-78-219 on Examination of Veterans Claiming Herbicide Toxicity

a. The first quarterly reports documenting the VAMC's workload which are required by this Circular, are due in VACO by October 18. When these reports are all accumulated they will be shared with the Committee members.

b. Definitive medical review of the reports will be conducted by a panel of VACO physicians. The panel, consisting of representatives from medicine (including dermatology) neurology, psychiatry and pathology, will be activated within the near future.

3. VA Testimony Before the House Veterans Affairs Committee

Testimony concerning the VA's approach to the evaluation of patients claiming herbicide toxicity will be presented by Dr. Haber on October 11 before the Subcommittee on Facilities and Benefits. A copy of that testimony is attached.

4. Research Project on Dioxin Levels in Body Fat

The implementation of this project is being delayed by the difficulty in finding a surgeon to coordinate it. Dr. Hobson will continue his search for a proper coordinator, with the appropriate assistance of other Committee members.

5. Proposed Epidemiological Study of "Natural" Catastrophies Involving Herbicides

a. The initiation of such a study was discussed at the September 25 meeting of the Advisory Committee. A member of that Committee, Dr. Walter Melvin, Professor of Environmental Health Services at Colorado State University, would be willing to undertake such a study if he can obtain the necessary funding support.

b. Dr. Schepers has prepared a series of letters for the Administrator's signature to appropriate federal agencies (e.g., HEW, NIH, EPA, NIOSH, etc.) suggesting that they consider funding a herbicide natural disaster study. These letters will be processed through the usual channels in the near future.

#### 6. Air Force Study on Herbicides

The VA continues to be unable to obtain this study for reasons which are unclear. Accordingly, the DOD will be approached directly by VA top management in an attempt to obtain at least a "draft" of copy of the report, and the report's author, Captain Young, will be invited to discuss it at a future Advisory Committee meeting.

#### 7. Circular on AFIP Registry

Circular 10-78-234 (dated September 29, 1978) announces the establishment of a registry of AFIP of pathological materials removed from VA patients who have had exposure to potentially toxic herbicides during the Vietnam War. These materials will be retained indefinitely in order that they can be examined from a pathological or toxicological viewpoint should it appear scientifically desirable in the future. Dr. LeGolvan is the VACO contact for this program.

#### 8. Other Items

Progress was reported by Committee members in the following areas.

##### a. Chartering of the VACO Advisory Committee

The VA's request to obtain a charter for the Advisory Committee is now in OMB awaiting approval. If a meeting of the group appears necessary before the approval is obtained, it will be held as an ad hoc advisory activity utilizing federal agency representatives as members and outsider experts as consultants.

##### b. Maps of Areas in Vietnam Sprayed with Herbicides

Mr. Peckarsky and Ms. DiNunzio are continuing their efforts to obtain these maps from DOD. They are working with an employee of that agency, Mr. Tom Dashiell, to obtain the data needed. Mr. Dashiell who was DOD's Project Officer on NAS study of the herbicide issue, will be visiting VACO on October 12. The members of the Committee will be able to interact with him at that time.

c. Responses to the Committee's Five Questions

Dr. Schepers reported that he would attempt to obtain a consensus of Advisory Committee members' responses to these questions through the mail.

d. Study on Liver Cancers Among VA Patients

Dr. Schepers reported progress made on this study which is expected to contribute insights into the potential of herbicides to cause liver cancer.

e. Development of a Central Herbicide Registry

Ms. Kilduff continues to work on establishment of this Registry. She will contact Committee members for their inputs.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

  
RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.

Attachment