

Agenda

U.S.

Herbreides (def.) Exposure

The possible health related effects of exposure to herbicides, especially those containing the contaminant dioxin, have received widespread attention throughout the United States. Although the medical literature is extensive on this subject and animal experiments are well documented, little is known concerning the long term health effects in man.

A source of this information would be an evaluation of industrial accidents which occurred in the past. One such incident happened in a chemical plant located in Nitro, West Virginia in 1949. Leakage in a chemical reactor resulted in exposure of more than two hundred employees to 2, 4, 5-TCD, which on analysis was shown to contain dioxin. The employees became ill but recovered. Family members of the employees also became ill since the chemical was carried home via the work clothes. The long range health effects of this chemical exposure were never documented.

This letter is submitted to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in the belief that your agency might sponsor an epidemiological study as a follow-up to the industrial accident mentioned above. This study would provide valuable information on the question of the long range health effects on humans exposed to dioxin.

The Veterans Administration's interest in this information derives from recent statements by Vietnam veterans claiming health related effects following exposure to herbicides during the period of 1962-1971. Some samples of a herbicide (2, 4, 5-T) employed in Vietnam contained dioxin.

The Honorable
Joseph A. Califano
Department of Health, Education,
and Welfare

Information regarding the health related effects
in man of exposure to herbicides could be of importance to a
large number of persons in the United States due to the use of
these chemicals in the agricultural and forestry industries.
We hope that your response to our request for the study will
be favorable.

Sincerely,

MAX CLELAND
Administrator

SIGNED AND DISPATCHED
JAN 11 1979
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

cc: 02

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THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

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The Honorable Max Cleland
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Max:

Thank you for your recent letter suggesting an epidemiological study to determine the health-related effects of herbicide exposure in man.

Your proposal for an evaluation of the 1949 industrial accident in Nitro, West Virginia, seems reasonable. However, I am sure you realize the difficulties which would be involved, after 30 years, in identifying and analyzing exposures of these employees and their families. I am asking Dr. William Foege, Director of the Center for Disease Control, to have his staff at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) investigate the possibility of conducting such a study. Dr. Anthony Robbins, Director of NIOSH, will call your office to discuss the feasibility of your proposal and arrange for a meeting of appropriate staff members.

I shall ask Dr. Foege to keep me informed of developments.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

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MEDICAL SERVICE (VACO)