

5/17/79

Meeting of the VACO Steering Committee on Herbicide Toxicity

May 11, 1979

1. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM.
2. The first topic discussed was the VA response to Senator Cranston's letter on the federal response to questions concerning herbicide toxicity. The latest draft of this response was circulated to the members for their comments.
3. The next topic raised was that of our progress on construction of a Registry for Vietnam Veterans Exposed to Herbicides. Progress in computerizing the several sets of data required for this Registry was reviewed. It was pointed out that the VA is working actively with DOD to obtain the necessary data on herbicide spraying in Vietnam and the movement of troops in the sprayed areas. A definitive meeting on the availability and status of the required data will be held at DOD on May 16. Following this, we will finalize the components and scope of the information-processing system required to support the Registry.
4. The progress on the Study of Dioxin Levels in Fat was reviewed. The names and diagnoses of the 14 individuals already biopsied is listed in the Appendix. The fat specimens already obtained will be analyzed shortly by Dr. Gross. It is anticipated that the remaining biopsy specimens required by the study will be obtained within the foreseeable future.

5. Progress in the organization of the Advisory Committee on Health Related Effects of Herbicides was reviewed. The constituent groups which are to be represented have been contacted and their nominations for membership solicited. The date for the first meeting of the Committee can not be set until the membership list has been finalized and published in the Federal Register. Hopefully, this process will be completed by early in June.

The relationship between the Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee was discussed at length. Several suggestions for the configuration of this relationship were raised by the members and will be conveyed to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

6. The discussion that was held by Dr. Ton-That-Tung of Vietnam and the Steering Committee members on May 9 was reviewed. It was the consensus of the members that the talk was of some medical interest but that Dr. Tung presented no new definitive scientific data on the long-term effects of herbicides on human health. Specifically, it appeared that Dr. Tung's hypothesis that dioxin can produce liver cancer and teratogenesis in humans was not supported by any of the data which he presented. In fact, when pressed on this point Dr. Tung readily admitted that he had no proof of any chronic

effects of herbicides on human health. However, he did urge that his speculations be utilized as the basis for designing the appropriate studies, some of which might be conducted in Vietnam.

7. The Steering Committee members were requested to provide suggestions for agenda items for the first meeting of the Advisory Committee. These items should be sent to llF by c.o.b. May 24, 1979.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard A. Levinson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

RICHARD A. LEVINSON, M.D.