



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

NOV 24 1992

In Reply Refer To: 116A

Ms. Shannon C. Puglia
P.O. Box 372
Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328

Dear Ms. Puglia:

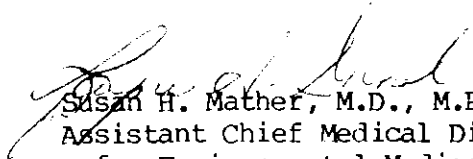
Your letter of October 19, 1992, to the Chief Medical Director regarding your husband's death and our claims' program was recently referred to this office for response.

We want to assure you that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has not made a final determination as to whether colon cancer should be service-connected based on exposure to herbicides containing dioxin. However, the evidence that we have seen to date does not show a significant statistical association between exposure to herbicides containing dioxin and the subsequent development of colon cancer.

As you know, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is now carefully considering available scientific evidence regarding associations between diseases, including colon cancer, and exposure to dioxin and other chemical compounds in herbicides used in Vietnam. The NAS review should be completed in July 1993. We are hopeful that the findings of that non-governmental entity will be very helpful in adjudicating claims for disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.

Regardless of the NAS findings and VA claim decisions, we encourage you to appeal, through the appropriate avenues, any decisions that you think erroneous. We are not aware of an attempt to tamper, prejudice, and improperly influence the adjudication of your claim. These are very serious charges. If you have any substantive evidence to support your allegations, we suggest that you bring this matter to the attention of the Acting Secretary.

Sincerely yours,


Susan H. Mather, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Chief Medical Director
for Environmental Medicine and Public Health