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MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL TOXICOLOGY PROGRAM

TO : Chair, Interagency Work Group
Phenoxy Herbicides and their Contaminants

DATE: October 22, 1980

FROM : Chair, Scientific Panel

SUBJECT: Progress Report

The August 1 progress report and Herbicide Orange Status Report stimulated considerable interest as evidenced by comments received at the Public Meeting of the Work Group held on September 22. In addition the Chair of the Scientific Panel appeared during September before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs, and the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee to expand on and clarify the progress and status of research relevant to veterans who may have been exposed to Herbicide Orange.

The IWG recommendation that a study of personnel involved in the application of Herbicide Orange -- Operation Ranch Hand -- be conducted by the U.S. Air Force was adopted. Responsibility for oversight of the conduct and evaluation of the study was assigned to the Scientific Panel augmented by scientists from outside the Federal Government. In concert with your staff, a charter for the advisory committee is being prepared and names of appropriate scientists in the government and private sector are being collected.

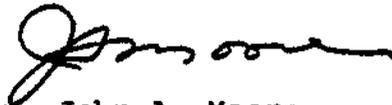
The Scientific Panel also reviewed a draft protocol of the CDC Birth Defects Study. The Panel was generally satisfied with the protocol's contents and Dr. Erickson's efforts to solicit advice from several veterans groups in the development of the protocol. The Panel anticipates receipt of a final protocol for its review and endorsement on or about November 1.

The Chair of the Scientific Panel received a document that describes the efforts of the Department of Defense, through the examination of a variety of records, to identify specific troop locations, at a company level, proximate to areas sprayed with Herbicide Orange. Briefings from DoD staff and the GAO presented to the parent IWG at its October meeting were beneficial. The Scientific Panel is awaiting the interim results of further DoD efforts involving two additional battalions before undertaking an in-depth evaluation and preparation of recommendations as to further scientific efforts. This evaluation should be completed in November.

The Scientific Panel, under the leadership of Dr. Patricia Honchar, completed a review (attached) of the "Agent Orange Male Mouse Study" completed by the National Toxicology Program on August 1. The purpose of this study was to determine if composite exposure to 2,4-D, 2,4,5-T and 2,3,7,8-TCDD would have an effect on reproduction and fertility of treated male mice. The study concluded that treatment did not result in a significant decrement in fertility or excess of congenital defects in offspring of the treated mice. Eight of the nine reviewers of the report found the study to be basically sound and did not question the major scientific conclusions. The interpretation of the Scientific Panel was that, although animal toxicity studies are not ultimately definitive or directly extrapolated to humans, they traditionally have predictive value and therefore reduce the probability that exposure to Herbicide Orange may be responsible for an excess of birth defects in the children of male Vietnam veterans. The predictive value of these experimental data would be strengthened by human epidemiology studies.

The Scientific Panel is of the opinion that persons with occupational exposure to phenoxy acids constitute a valuable population from which to determine the long term health consequences of exposure to phenoxy acid herbicides. It therefore noted with considerable interest a press release issued by the Monsanto Chemical Company announcing the results of an epidemiological study of workers at its Nitro, W. Va. facility. The Panel has requested a copy of the complete report for review and interpretation.

Finally, the Scientific Panel has committed itself to a review of the progress and interim results of a number of scientific activities, specifically activities dealing with mutagenicity, chemical analyses and epidemiological investigations.



Dr. John A. Moore