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Author

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Report/Article Title Press Release: HHS News, October 21, 1981,
Chronology of Activities on Agent Orange

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Description Notes Announcement that HHS Secretary Richard S. Schweiker made public the chronology of activities re: agent orange. Chronology is attached.

HHS NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Laura Genero--(202) 245-6343
Richard McGowan--(202) 245-7204

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, October 21, 1981

HHS Secretary Richard S. Schweiker today made public the attached Chronology of Activities on Agent Orange.

#

FROM: James S. Stockdale
Deputy Under Secretary for
Intergovernmental Affairs

TO : The Secretary

CHRONOLOGY OF ACTIVITIES RE: AGENT ORANGE

The first meeting of the re-established and expanded Agent Orange Working Group was held on August 28, 1981. The first task of the Working Group was to review the status of all ongoing and planned Federal research and related activities.

Each member agency was directed to provide updated reports on the status of its current or planned research activities.

A proposed protocol for the design of the Veterans Administration epidemiological study will be reviewed by the Working Group's Science Panel.

A number of veterans organizations have been briefed on the continuing military records search that is being conducted by the Army Agent Orange Task Force. Preparations are continuing for the Air Force Ranch Hand Study. That study involves pilots and maintenance personnel engaged in the spraying of herbicides during the Vietnam conflict. Concern was expressed that the fullest possible participation by Ranch Hand personnel be obtained for this study of possible health effects related to exposure to Agent Orange. This is critical because the Ranch Hands are a relatively small group of approximately 1200.

A public affairs panel was created and will develop plans for a public meeting of the Working Group to be scheduled later this year.

The Working Group also agreed to establish a resource development panel to assure adequate funding and personnel resources.

Dr Vernon Houk, Chair of the Working Group's Science Panel, has plans to review all research.

Dr. Houk and several other members of the Working Group visited the Army Agent Orange Task Force Office for a briefing on the status of the Department of Defense records search. During the briefing, it became apparent that a potentially

existed

promising new concept/for the identification of people exposed to Agent Orange in addition to the Air Force Ranch Hand personnel or broadly defined units of ground troops. The full research panel was briefed on this new information.

The information may provide the basis for a new approach to finding answers to some of the serious scientific questions before the Working Group. It opens the possibility of an expanded number of potentially identifiable exposures to Agent Orange in addition to those involved in the Ranch Hand study. Further developments regarding the information will be included in the next Working Group report.

The Agent Orange Working Group's predecessor, the Inter-agency Work Group to Study the Possible Long-Term Health Effects of Phenoxy Herbicides and Contaminants (IWG), also undertook a number of activities during the transition period between April, 1981, when it transmitted its seventh report, and August, when the expanded Working Group convened.

At the May meeting of the IWG, a status report was given on the birth defects study being conducted by the Centers for Disease Control. It was reported that the Office of Management and Budget had approved the study and preparations for the study were under way, with completion likely in the summer or fall of 1983.

At the same meeting, it was reported that a representative of the Medical Follow-Up Agency of the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council had been briefed on and had reviewed the Defense Department's records search effort and had concluded it could be difficult to identify a population of ground troops the nature and extent of whose exposure to Agent Orange could be reliably reconstructed and documented.

At its June meeting, the IWG was honored by a visit by the Australian Minister of Veterans Affairs, Senator Anthony Messner. Senator Messner told the Group of his government's Agent Orange-related research and urged continuing cooperation between our countries in the area of research. During the meeting, the IWG was assured of the Administration's strong support for Agent Orange research.

As you know, Agent Orange efforts of the various Federal bodies include research as follows:

1. The Agent Orange Working Group coordinates all Federal Agent Orange research. It does not undertake any research on its own but rather acts as the coordinator and monitor.

2. The Air Force Ranch Hand Study is to be monitored by an independent advisory committee in addition to the Agent Orange Working Group. This advisory committee will meet publicly (probably beginning in November) and will include scientists from inside and outside the Federal government.
3. The Veterans Administration Advisory Committee on Health-Related Effects of Herbicides meets periodically to review all VA herbicide-related research. The committee includes scientists from inside and outside the government as well as representatives of veterans organizations.
4. The Office of Technology Assessment of the Congress has established a scientific review panel to review the proposed protocol for the design of the VA epidemiological study and will provide the VA with its conclusions and recommendations regarding the protocol.
5. There are also a number of State-level Agent Orange commissions charged with undertaking and/or monitoring Agent Orange research.

The report notes in conclusion that a number of veterans organizations, members of the public and Congress have expressed support for the Administration's actions regarding Agent Orange and related research.

Attachments:

- (A) Memorandum of August 21, 1981, Re-establishing the Agent Orange Working Group, from HHS Secretary Richard S. Schweiker in his capacity as Chairman Pro-Tem of the Cabinet Council on Human Resources.
- (B) Opening Remarks of Agent Orange Working Group Chairman James S. Stockdale at the Working Group's August 28, 1981 meeting.
- (C) Report by Dr. Vernon Houk, Chair of the Working Group's Science Panel.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

AUG 21 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
SECRETARY OF LABOR
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR POLICY
DEVELOPMENT
CHAIRMAN, COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS
DIRECTOR OF ACTION
ADMINISTRATOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
POLICY

FROM : *Rich Schweiker*
SECRETARY RICHARD SCHWEIKER
CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM, CABINET COUNCIL
ON HUMAN RESOURCES

SUBJECT : Agent Orange Working Group

The Administration has reviewed the excellent work of the Interagency Work Group to Study the Possible Long-Term Health Effects of Phenoxy Herbicides and Contaminants and believes that it has made significant progress toward fulfilling its important mandate. By bringing together knowledgeable scientists from the various Federal departments and agencies the Work Group has identified ongoing research activities on phenoxy herbicides and contaminants and begun to develop and organize the means to carry out additional needed scientific research.

President Reagan shares the widespread public and congressional concern over possible adverse health effects among Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other substances. The President stated, during his meeting with national veterans organization leaders at the White House on July 17, 1981, that the Administration is giving special consideration to those concerns of Vietnam veterans.

At the White House meeting, the President announced that the administration had re-established an expanded Working Group as the Agent Orange Working Group and raised its status to Cabinet Council level. The President is personally determined to assure that the full resources of the Federal government are

available to support the Working Group's continuing efforts. The decision to re-establish and expand the membership of the Working Group and to make it an integral part of the Cabinet Council on Human Resources reflects the President's commitment and accords the highest priority to its mission.

As Chairman Pro-Tem of the Cabinet Council on Human Resources, I am, accordingly, reaffirming by this memorandum the Agent Orange Working Group's mandate of December 11, 1979 and providing specific guidance as to how that mandate is to be carried out in accordance with the Cabinet Council's decisions.

The Department of Health and Human Services shall continue to have lead responsibility for overall direction and management of the Agent Orange Working Group. The Secretary of Defense and the Administrator of Veterans Affairs shall continue to assure that their respective agencies participate fully in all Working Group activities. The Departments of Agriculture and Labor and the Environmental Protection Agency, each of which have until now been observers, shall assume full membership and their respective agency heads shall assure that those agencies participate fully in all Work Group activities.

In addition, ACTION, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Council of Economic Advisers, as well as the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Office of Policy Development, shall assume membership on the Working Group and the heads of those agencies and offices shall assure that the resources of their respective agency or office are fully available to support it.

Also, the congressional Office of Technology Assessment, which has been actively involved in all Working Group activities as an observer, will be invited to continue to participate in that capacity, and the General Accounting Office, which has been extremely helpful to the Working Group in the past, will continue to be kept abreast of developments and invited to advise and assist as appropriate.

The Working Group has initiated research efforts designed to find answers to many of the questions surrounding Agent Orange that have been raised. These efforts include the birth defects study being conducted by HHS' Centers for Disease Control, the Ranch Hand Study being conducted by the Air Force, the epidemiological study being planned by the Veterans Administration pursuant to P.L. 96-151, and the compilation by HHS' National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health of a national registry of workers exposed to dioxins. Each of these research activities, as well as the other important research

activities being conducted under the overall guidance of the Working Group, are to be continued without interruption or delay.

The Working Group has developed an impressive record of scientific objectivity, impartiality and integrity and it is imperative to the success of the Working Group effort that this record and the Group's credibility be maintained. In this regard, regular progress reports to the Cabinet Council, the Congress and the public will continue to be made by the Agent Orange Working Group.

To assure effective leadership of the Working Group, I am hereby appointing James Stockdale, HHS Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, as Chair. Also, I am appointing Dr. Vernon N. Houk of the Center for Environmental Health of the Centers for Disease Control as Chair of the Working Group's Science Panel. In addition, I am appointing HHS Legal Counsel Leslie A. Platt, who has served as legal adviser to and staff director of the Working Group since its inception, to continue in those capacities. I know and believe you will find that these individuals share my commitment to carrying out this important mission.

Please review your representation on the Working Group to assure that your agency or office is adequately represented by appropriate technical experts, scientists and policy-level officials. In order to facilitate the Group's effectiveness, it is of course important that each agency's total membership be limited.

The first meeting of the full Working Group has been scheduled for Friday, August 28, 1981 and a meeting of the Science Panel will be scheduled for shortly thereafter. Accordingly, please let Mr. Bart Kull, Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs (245-6156), or Dr. Peter Beach, HHS Director of Veterans Affairs (245-2210), know as soon as possible the name(s) of your designated representative(s) so that briefing materials may be forwarded to them.

Attached for your information is a copy of the memorandum of the Executive Secretary to the Cabinet Council on Human Resources establishing the Working Group.

Attachment

cc: Comptroller General of the United States
Director, Congressional Office of Technology Assessment
Mr. Robert Carleson
Mr. Edwin Gray

Agent Orange Working Group
August 28, 1981 Meeting

Introductory Statement by James Stockdale, EHS Deputy
Under Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs and
Chair, Agent Orange Working Group

Good Morning. I am James Stockdale, EHS Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs and Chair of the Agent Orange Working Group. As Chair of the Working Group, I wish to express to you my beliefs about the work under way.

Many of you have known frustration in the course of time serving on this project. Occasionally there has been the concern that it would be stuffed away in some dusty corner of official memory and permitted to die of neglect.

Some of you have believed - and in that belief have held firm, and in that firmness have kept the mission and the mechanism of this group intact and alive.

The President of the United States, in his recognition of the trust this nation holds on behalf of those who have served our country in war ... in recognition of the heavy questions that eat at the minds of many who served ... has publicly and forcefully reaffirmed and reinforced the goals this working group seeks to achieve.

President Reagan recently said "we are giving special consideration to the concerns of Vietnam veterans over Agent Orange. Our fiscal year '82 budget will contain a large

increase in funding for the continued study of Agent Orange. In addition to the VA's epidemiological study and the Air Force Ranch Hand Study, we have reestablished an expanded Interagency Work Group as the Agent Orange work group and, yesterday, we raised its status to Cabinet Council level."

If ever there has been a statement of genuine concern for the fears that lurk in the minds of many Vietnam veterans and their families - that was it.

Those fears of possible long term adverse health effects as a result of exposure to Agent Orange are very real. They demand answers. They demand the kind of deliberate, objective research that will provide as many answers as science can give.

There is no fear like the fear of the unknown. It is the mission of this working group to make known the unknown insofar as humanly possible.

This working group will not cave in to the hysteria of emotionalism that surrounds this issue. This working group has a responsibility to turn aside from the barrage of demands for quick and easy answers based on assumptions and fear rather than facts.

Equally so, this working group will not bow to any interests that might seek to sweep this issue under the rug - to pretend it does not exist and hope it will simply go away. This working

group will not succumb to any effort to stonewall. This issue will not go away. Efforts to stonewall it will fail.

This working group's mission is to seek truth and to reveal openly as much truth as can be found.

All of the truth may be beyond our grasp but we have a moral obligation to reach and even to stretch our reaching beyond the limits we believe imposed upon us by the nature of our finite minds and the current state of science.

On behalf of those who wonder and worry and fear we can do no less.

I am especially pleased, therefore, that we have assembled such an outstanding team for this project.

At this time, I would like to introduce some of the key people in this effort from the Department of Health and Human Services. First, I would like to introduce Dr. Vernon Houk of the Center for Environmental Health of the Centers for Disease Control, who will chair the Science Panel. Next, Leslie Platt, our legal counsel and staff director, and Bart Kull, my special assistant, who will chair the group in my absence. Also, you all know Dr. Peter Beach, the Department's director of veteran affairs who has been and continues to provide overall coordination for this effort. We all welcome you to the Department and look forward to working with you.



Memorandum

Date September 24, 1981

From Chairman, Science Panel
Agent Orange Working Group

Subject Report of the Science Panel to the Agent Orange Working Group

To Mr. James Stockdale
Chairman, Agent Orange Working Group
Deputy Under Secretary for Intergovernmental
Affairs, HHS

Attached is the Report of the Science Panel.


Vernon N. Houk, M.D.

Attachment



REPORT OF SCIENCE PANEL
TO THE
AGENT ORANGE WORKING GROUP

The Science Panel met September 2 and September 15, 1981. A summary of these meetings and other activities is as follows:

Veterans Administration (VA) Draft Protocol for Epidemiological "Studies of Agent Orange"

The Veterans Administration Draft Protocol for Epidemiological "Studies of Agent Orange" received from the University of California at Los Angeles (VA Contract V101(93)P-842) was distributed to the members of the Science Panel. It was agreed that the review would take place in two stages.

The members are to transmit to the Chair by September 18 a general overview and general comments of what needs to be done. By October 16, detailed, specific comments and suggestions for protocol design on what needs to be done, how to do it, and suggestions on who has the capability of doing it should be transmitted to the Chair. The Chair will consolidate the comments and return it to the members of the Science Panel for review with final comments on the proposed study to be submitted to the VA before their committee meeting on this subject in November.

The present VA proposed protocol is scheduled to be reviewed by the Science Panel, the VA Committee, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and the National Academy of Science, National Research Council (NRC). Dr. Honchar suggested that the document was not yet ready for review by the NRC and suggested the VA discuss with NRC that they consider withholding a review until a more detailed and specific document can be made available. The Science Panel members concurred with this suggestion.

Dr. Gough of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment indicated that their review has been completed.

A Case Control Study of the Relationship Between Exposure to 2,4-D and Spontaneous Abortions in Humans

The Science Panel was asked to review the document "A Case Control Study of the Relationship Between Exposure to 2,4-D and Spontaneous Abortions in Humans" prepared for the National Forest Products Association and the U.S. Department of Agriculture--Forest Service by SRI International. Dr. Kimbrough and a rather large intergovernmental group has reviewed this study in detail during its route to completion. Those comments were made available to the Science Panel. The members of the Science Panel were asked to complete this review process and send written comments to the Chair by the end of October.

Mr. Platt indicated that he would send to all agencies involved the list of past, present, and anticipated activities on the subject of herbicides. The agencies will be asked to review and update that document and return to Mr. Platt within 1 month.

Data Sets

There was considerable discussion about additional data sets that may be available. Dr. Shepard was asked to have the VA review and report back to the Science Panel specific information on the VA death certificates, any health information that may be contained in VA life insurance information, and to survey the major VA hospitals for any additional studies or information that may be available.

The Department of Defense (DOD) was asked to report on the status of the Soft Tissue Sarcoma Registry at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP). DOD was asked to investigate and report on the kinds and amounts of herbicides used in non-Vietnam DOD installations in various parts of the United States and the rest of the world.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) was asked to report on any information from their sources (Extension or otherwise) on the use of herbicides in the United States. Dr. Shaw of the DA was concerned that special groups in the United States, such as those involved in spraying the electrical power transmission lines rights of way, could be identified and could contain significant health information on workers involved in this activity. Drs. Rall and Landrigan felt that this information would at best be sketchy. Dr. Shaw was asked to report to the Science Panel on this subject.

VA Mortality Study

Dr. Kimbrough suggested that the VA proceed with the review of the VA death certificates for Vietnam veterans. VA has 95 to 98 percent of death certificates of veterans who died on file in various locations around the country. The study would also include, in cooperation with DOD, individuals who died while still on active duty. Dr. Kimbrough will work with Dr. Shepard and others to explore the feasibility of this being accomplished. It was suggested by several members of the Science Panel that in order to be successful, individuals will have to be identified and trained to extract the specific information needed in a uniform manner from the records. It is unlikely to be successful simply by paying available people overtime to review records in their current installation.

International Symposium on Chlorinated Dioxins and Related Compounds October 25-29, 1981

Dr. Shepard asked the Science Panel to endorse and various agencies to co-sponsor (without commitment of dollars) the subject conference. Dr. Landrigan felt that the speakers listed on the brochure presented only one side of the

subject material. Dr. Shepard indicated that this was not intended, and anybody with any information was invited to participate.

Attempts will be made to contact the group evaluating soft tissue sarcoma from Sweden to participate. Dr. Honchar was also asked to present her recent study on this subject.

Since the above discussion on the subject symposium, Dr. Lennart Hardell of Sweden asked to present their data on soft tissue sarcoma. He was apparently told by organizers of the conference that there was no room on the program for his paper. The Chair communicated with Dr. Shepard that this was not in accord with the previous agreement and was asked to use his influence with the symposium organizers to have Dr. Hardell's paper included in the formal program.

No governmental agency will formally co-sponsor or otherwise endorse the symposium though many will provide participation by their employees.

Other Groups to be Explored

Major Young suggested that there are other individuals who may have been exposed to Agent Orange in high doses that could be identified and available for study. These include approximately 50 scientists and technicians that were assigned to the Plant Sciences Laboratory, Fort Dietrick, Maryland, 1962-70; approximately 200 scientists and technicians involved in the development and evaluation of spray equipment at Eglin Air Force Base, 1962-70; and approximately 200 individuals who were involved in the disposal of Agent Orange (Project PACER-HO 1977). Major Young was asked to make a presentation at a future meeting of the Science Panel.

After the previous discussion of Data Sets above, Dr. Bricker shared with the Chair information on "aborted missions." An aborted mission is one when for various reasons the intended targeted spraying of the herbicide was not done but the material was dumped from the aircraft. The Chair asked Dr. Honchar to quickly review these data. Her report is attached. Major General Augerson formally notified the Science Panel of these data. That notification and acknowledgment of the Science Panel are attached.

On September 15 a meeting was called for the Science Panel to examine this new information.

Aborted Missions

Dr. Bricker and Mr. Christian presented a briefing on aborted missions. They have identified 90 between 1965-1971 and have reasonable information on 28 (MACV records). It is possible that information could be developed on the other 62 (Air Force printouts). They suggested that major attention be given to the activities at four locations in Vietnam. In addition to exposed personnel in these four areas associated with the aborted missions, there may be other groups that have had extensive exposure. These may include personnel who were involved in base perimeter spraying, by air or by land, sprayers of riverbanks, and any personnel who were used for cleanup activities when there were leaks or disruptions of the storage containers or other significant accidental spills. We would suggest that the Defense Department develop

information on those units that might have had the highest exposure. It is necessary to determine the duration of acute, heavy, and long term exposure to all herbicides used in Vietnam. For the herbicide Agent Orange, it would also be useful if information could be developed on the manufacturer and date of manufacture or at least whether this was one stripe or two stripe Agent. By consensus of the Science Panel, Drs. Honchar and Kimbrough were asked to work with Dr. Bricker and Mr. Christian to develop information from the Army records and other documents. Hopefully, it will be possible to identify units that have had considerable exposure to Agent Orange from these records.

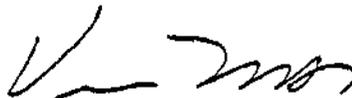
A request regarding this matter was sent to Major General Augerson on September 21. A copy of that letter is attached. The Science Panel recommends that the Chair, Agent Orange Working Group, ask the Resource Panel to explore providing the necessary resources to complete this task. By October 20, we should have a fairly good estimate of what tasks will be needed. DOD should provide a resource estimate. Not only are there groups who may have been acutely heavily exposed to these materials but the surface is likely to be heavily contaminated. It appears that at least some of these incidents occurred in places with significant populations remaining in contact with the contaminated area for a period of time. The Science Panel will explore the possibility of identifying similar non-Vietnamese areas of contamination that would lend themselves to a study of for how long and how much of the TCDD is likely to remain in the soil. It is known that TCDD degrades upon exposure to ultraviolet light. TCDD in soil on the other hand may be extremely persistent. Dr. Kearney of DA has been asked to report on this by October 20 in more detail. Dr. Kearney was also asked to determine what environmental monitoring data is available from Vietnam on 2,4,5T; 2,4D; and TCDD.

Laboratory Quality Monitoring

Dr. Eric Sampson of the Clinical Chemistry Division, CEH, CDC, presented to the Panel some general information on quality control procedures used by the information on new methods developed at CDC for the precise measurement of five reproductive hormones.

The Science Panel recommends for any investigations, including the Ranch Hand Study, that tight quality controls of laboratory tests be incorporated into their studies. This is even more critical when longitudinal observations are being made on groups so the data will be comparable over time.

Respectfully submitted September 24, 1981.



Vernon N. Houk, M.D.
Chairman, Science Panel
Agent Orange Working Group

Memorandum

Date September 14, 1981

From Science Panel Member

Subject Preliminary Assessment of Epidemiologic Utility of Aborted Ranch Hand Missions

To
Chairman, Science Panel, Agent Orange Working Group
Through: ~~X~~ Director, DSHEFS, NIOSH *PK*
Chief, IWSB, DSHEFS, NIOSH *William Harper*

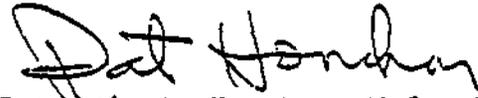
On September 10, 1981, I met with Department of Defense personnel to learn about aborted Ranch Hand missions and to determine whether adequate information about these missions is available to allow identification of a cohort(s) with defined exposure for epidemiologic study. To this end, questions about both the exposure and potential cohorts were explored.

Concerning the exposure, ninety aborted missions have been identified. Of these, some documentation (e.g. date, altitude, agent, gallons, location, etc.) is available for 28, and less complete information on the additional 62 missions is contained in the HERBS tape. It will be important to assemble the original documentation for the additional 62 missions. Based on what is known about the 28, it appears that ultimately documentation for some of the missions will be incomplete. When all available data about these missions is assembled, information such as agent, altitude, gallons, time and date when available can be analyzed to estimate the area contaminated by the emergency dumps. The Army has begun to map the aborted missions, and this activity can and should continue with additional information on the emergencies.

Concerning the population exposed, it appears at this time that it will continue to be difficult to know with absolute certainty from records that a particular individual or unit was located directly under and came in contact with Agent Orange released in an emergency dump. The Army has, from preliminary mapping of the missions, begun to identify military populations in closest proximity to clusters of aborted missions. At this time, four population areas have been identified with from approximately 800 to approximately 12,000 military personnel in residence at the time of the aborted missions in the four areas.

In summary, this evaluation is preliminary. After all available information about the known aborted missions is assembled and evaluated, continued effort can be applied to identify the ground units in closest proximity. At that time, issues of potential cohort size, controls, etc. can be considered. It is very important to note, however, that further information about these aborted missions at best can be utilized to maximize the probability of exposure of a cohort; it will be difficult or probably

impossible to define the exposure of each individual in any cohort. Questions of frequency and amount of exposure, and multiple exposures, will remain. And finally, given that the bulk of Agent Orange exposure including the aborted missions occurred in the late 1960's, the issue of inadequate latency must be addressed if a cohort mortality study is proposed.


Patricia A. Honchar, M.S., Ph.D.

Handwritten note:
Honchar, Patricia A.