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**Item ID Number** 05638

**Not Scanned**

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**Corporate Author** Agent Orange Projects Office

**Report/Article Title** Status Report of Agent Orange Activities for Period of  
January - April 1985

**Journal/Book Title**

**Year** 1985

**Month/Day**

**Color**

**Number of Images** 6

**Description Notes**

STATUS REPORT  
OF  
AGENT ORANGE ACTIVITIES  
FOR PERIOD OF  
JANUARY - APRIL 1985

Prepared by: Agent Orange Projects Office (10A7)  
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Washington, DC 20420

## Chloracne Continuing Educational Workshop

Approval has been given for the conduct of an Agent Orange workshop, with a primary focus on Chloracne, a skin condition which may result from exposure to dioxin, a contaminant of Agent Orange. Current plans are for the 1 1/2 day conference to be held in Washington, D.C. on August 20-21. It is anticipated that a representative combination of approximately 90 VA dermatologists, environmental physicians and fee basis dermatologists from across the Nation will participate. This conference is the third in a series of continuing education conferences for VA health care staff on Agent Orange-related issues.

Primary goals of the chloracne workshop include: updating VA dermatologists and other physician participants on the "state-of-the-arts" as it relates to the diagnosis and treatment of chloracne; acquainting participants with the goals, objectives, and activities of the VA's Chloracne Task Force (CTF), currently chaired by Dr. A. Betty Fischmann, Chief, Dermatology Service, Washington VA Medical Center, and to inform participants of VA chloracne policy and the impact of legislation on the claims process for chloracne.

### Agent Orange Registry Examinations on Increase

As of February 28, 1985, the Veterans Administration computerized Agent Orange Registry data base indicates that 184,708 Vietnam veterans have received an initial ("first-time") registry examination. The records show that over 40,002 follow-up visits have been made by Vietnam veterans since the initiation of the Registry in May 1978. During the month of February 5,945 examinations were performed. This compares to 4,449 examinations in November 1984; 4,738 in December 1984; and 7,502 examinations in January 1985. The large influx of veterans reporting for examinations can be attributed partially to the recent Agent Orange-related litigation activities in New York State. Every effort is being made by those VA medical centers having the largest percentage of these individuals reporting for examinations to schedule them in a timely fashion. The Agent Orange Projects Office is closely monitoring this trend of increased examinations to ensure that every possible action, consistent with available resources, is being made to provide the veterans with expeditious service.

### Air Force Mortality Study Released

On February 7, 1985, Murphey A. Chesney, Major General, USAF, MC, Deputy Surgeon General, provided results of the second mortality report of the Ranch Hand (Agent Orange) study to the Veterans Administration. This second mortality analysis, like the baseline mortality study released in June 1983, did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the deaths recorded in the Ranch Hand group and the comparison group. In fact, the results outlined in the second report indicate that the Ranch Hand officers had a slightly lower death rate than their comparisons, whereas Ranch Hand ground personnel had a slightly higher death rate than the comparisons. None of these differences, according to the report, were statistically significant, nor was there a demonstrated relationship between exposure and mortality.

### AMA's Conclusions on Effects of TCDD

A January 1, 1985, article (U.S. Medicine, Vol. 21, No. 1) entitled "AMA Finds Dioxin Health Risks Unclear" advises that the American Medical Association has accepted without dissent a report by its council on scientific affairs that concludes the health effects of dioxin are uncertain. The 69-page report, which updates an earlier version issued in October 1981 was prepared by the same panel which wrote the original report. The report notes that even though three years have elapsed since the original report was published, the panel made little substantive change in its conclusions. The report noted that "Except for Chloracne ... TCDD has not demonstrated comparable levels of biologic activity in man."

## Massachusetts Mortality Study Results

The results of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts study entitled Mortality Among Vietnam Veterans in Massachusetts, 1972-1983 were provided to the VA's Agent Orange Projects Office on February 1, 1985.

The findings in this study, according to the conclusions of the researchers, support the hypothesis that white male Vietnam veterans are at greater risk of death due to self-initiated or stress-related conditions than the non-veteran white male population in Massachusetts. The results, according to the researchers, would support an effort to reduce early or untimely deaths among Vietnam veterans, in particular, preventable deaths such as those due to suicide or motor vehicle accidents. Although results indicate that the numbers of cancer deaths are small, the finding of excess deaths due to soft-tissue sarcoma and kidney cancer undoubtedly warrants further study. Data, including cancer incidence records from the Massachusetts Cancer Registry, and, if available, information on possible exposures to Agent Orange as reflected in detailed military service histories, as well as histories of other exposures to potential carcinogens would provide the statistical basis for the conduct of further studies in this area.