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TALKING PAPER  
ON  
PROJECT RANCH HAND II

*Introduction*  
PROBLEM

The Air Force has made the commitment to Congress and to the White House to conduct an epidemiologic study of possible health effects in Air Force personnel who conducted aerial herbicide missions in Vietnam. The purpose of this investigation is to determine whether there ~~have been~~, there are ~~now~~, or ~~there~~ will be long-term health effects attributable to occupational exposure to "Herbicide Orange" *and its contaminant TCDD.*

BACKGROUND *Overview*

The project consists of three integrated phases: a mortality study, a morbidity study, and a followup study. The mortality and morbidity study elements will be conducted almost simultaneously by use of study methods that include personnel tracking procedures and record reviews to pinpoint mortality patterns; extensive baseline telephone questionnaires to ascertain current and past health; comprehensive physical examinations to determine exact health status; and additional questionnaires and physical examinations to be administered periodically during the followup phase. The study will be a ~~five~~ <sup>5 1/2</sup> year project; however, data analyses from selected study areas will be available approximately twenty-one (21) months following the date the first questionnaires are administered. Our accomplishments to date include: literature reviewed and conceptually incorporated in the study design where appropriate, contacts established with leading international ~~Herbicide Orange~~ <sup>Dioxin</sup> experts, coordinative visits with six active epidemiologic investigations on herbicides, sustained

interagency coordination with Veterans Administration, the US Army and the Department of Defense. Fifteen million Air Force personnel records have been ~~reviewed~~ *Computer searched; and 37,000 records have been hand sorted.* The Ranch Hand group has been identified.

The baseline questionnaire has been developed. The mortality study phase is well underway. Basic statistical formats and data repository fundamentals have been established. The Air Force scientific protocol has been subjected to extensive peer review. To date, the protocol has been reviewed by the University of Texas School of Public Health, Houston; the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board; the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board; and the Board of Toxicology of the National Academy of Sciences. ~~We are awaiting the report of the review by the National Academy of~~

~~Sciences.~~

~~DISCUSSION~~ *Current Status*

The next phase of our study will begin with contacting Ranch Hand personnel and administering the questionnaire. This will be followed by comprehensive physical examinations of those who volunteer for the study. We will proceed with this phase as soon as we can incorporate the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences into the protocol.

CONCLUSIONS

The Air Force has begun its study of the Ranch Hand population. The protocol will be finalized and questionnaire administration will begin following receipt of the National Academy of Sciences peer review comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proceed with study.

TALKING PAPER

ON

PROJECT RANCHI HAND II

~~PROBLEM~~ Introduction

The Air Force has made the commitment to Congress and to the White House to conduct an epidemiologic study of possible health effects in Air Force personnel who conducted aerial herbicide missions in Vietnam. The purpose of this investigation is to determine whether there have been, there are now, or there will be long-term health effects attributable to occupational exposure to "Herbicide Orange" ~~AND ITS CONTAMINATED TCDD~~

~~BACKGROUND~~ Discussion

The project consists of three integrated phases: a mortality study, a morbidity study, and a followup study. The mortality and morbidity study elements will be conducted almost simultaneously by use of study methods that include personnel tracking procedures and record reviews to pinpoint mortality patterns; extensive baseline telephone questionnaires to ascertain current and past health; comprehensive physical examinations to determine exact health status; and additional questionnaires and physical examinations to be administered periodically during the followup phase.

Output  
The study will be a ~~five~~<sup>six</sup> (5) year project; however, data analyses from selected study areas will be available approximately twenty-one (21) months following the date the first questionnaires are administered.

Our accomplishments to date include: literature reviewed and conceptually incorporated in the study design where appropriate, contacts established with leading international ~~Herbicide Orange~~<sup>Agent</sup> experts, coordinative visits with six active epidemiologic investigations on herbicides, sustained

interagency coordination with Veterans Administration, the US Army and the Department of Defense. Fifteen million Air Force personnel records have been ~~reviewed by hand~~ <sup>computer searched and 37,000 records have been</sup> identified. <sup>The Ranch Hand group has been</sup> ~~identified~~. <sup>the control</sup> ~~group~~ <sup>group</sup> C-130 ~~aircrew and ground maintenance personnel~~ <sup>aircrew and ground maintenance personnel</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>filling</sup> the final stages of fuel identification. The baseline questionnaire has been developed. The mortality study phase is well underway. Basic statistical formats and data repository fundamentals have been established. The Air Force scientific protocol has been subjected to extensive peer review. To date, the protocol has been reviewed by the University of Texas School of Public Health, Houston; the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board; the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board; and the Board of Toxicology of the National Academy of Sciences. We are awaiting the report of the review by the National Academy of Sciences.

#### DISCUSSION

~~The next phase of our study~~ <sup>we</sup> will begin with contacting Ranch Hand personnel and administering the questionnaire <sup>to them and their matched controls.</sup> This will be followed by comprehensive physical examinations of those who volunteer for the study. ~~We~~ will ~~proceed~~ with this phase as soon as we can incorporate the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences into the protocol.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The Air Force has begun its study of the Ranch Hand population. The protocol will be finalized and questionnaire administration will begin following receipt of the National Academy of Sciences peer review comments. <sup>evaluation, and acceptance</sup> ~~and acceptance~~ <sup>incorporation of</sup> ~~incorporation of~~

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Proceed with study.