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August 29, 1973

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CONVERSATION WITH MR. WAYNE THOMPSON OF HOUSTON, TEXAS

I received a call today from Mr. Wayne Thompson, a physicist on the radiation safety committee of the St. Luke's Hospital in Houston, Texas. Mr. Thompson was interested in knowing whether there are any AEC regulations concerning the exposure of normal children to radiation in order to obtain a normal range for a nuclear medicine procedure. The radiation safety committee has under consideration a proposal from a research group in the hospital to conduct such a study. They wish to obtain normal values on 200 children under the age of 6 months who would be exposed to neutron activation for purposes of obtaining values for total burdens of certain elements such as calcium, potassium and sodium. After the normal values are established, they will use the procedure clinically. Mr. Thompson had misgivings about exposure of the normal children and was interested in knowing whether there is any AEC policy or regulation that covers this type of situation.

I discussed the matter with Dr. Weyzen and Dr. Alex Gottschalk of Franklin McLean Memorial Research Institute who was visiting. They expressed the opinion that they are unaware of any specific regulation directed toward this matter but would regard it as an undesirable practice. In Dr. Gottschalk's experience normal values on children are obtained by utilizing clinical cases that ultimately proved to be without relevant disease. The exposure solely for the purpose of gaining information would not be considered acceptable in their opinion. This is especially true because the whole body dose likely to be experienced would range from .5 rem to over 1 rem. They also cited the .5 rem limit on non-occupational exposure of individuals in the population as a possible supporting argument. The exposures in the study might easily exceed that value. The DHEW regulations on human use committee policy and procedures is also relevant. I relayed this information to Mr. Thompson later in the day and will have no further communication about it.

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