

HISTORY OF HEALTH GROUP DURING INTERIM PERIOD

(November 1945- May 1946)

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November 1945 to May 1946

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During this six months interim period the Health Group has been involved ~~mainly~~ in two phases of the work in addition to its former and more routine duties. These are:

(1) Termination procedures. Because of the exodus of the greater proportion of the laboratory personnel thru discharge from the Army or thru return to peacetime pursuits, the Health Group has had an enormous load. Often times other functions of this office have had to be limited in order to make use of the opportunity for interview and for physiological tests afforded by termination of these individuals. Adequately staffing our hematological and clinical laboratories and office has been a problem where these people too have terminated.

It was believed, however, that the termination procedure was most important for completing inadequate records and establishing some record in the many cases of workers whose names were not even listed in our files. These files are our only records for the protection of individuals as well as the Project and much energy has been expended in their reorganization. Photostatic copies are being made to avoid their loss or destruction.

Great pains were gone to by Wright Langham to obtain urine assays on plutonium workers who were terminating. Oftentimes the time between notification of discharge and leaving the Post was so short that some military personnel did not receive this important test. There was very little cooperation on the part of individuals about to be discharged in the conduct of this test. This has resulted in questionable results in several cases. (See memos.: Langham to Nolan and to Jette.)

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The hematological laboratory has been so pushed most of the time

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that (a) counting techniques have been less rigorous, which may lead to inaccuracies. (200 cells instead of 500 on Differentials, 1 pipette for w.b.c. and r.b.c. instead of 2 pipettes.) (b) Some groups of workers have not obtained counts every 4 to 6 wks as desired by group leaders and by this office. (c) Development work on the hematological picture in radiation exposures in human beings (Dickie granules) has not been carried on.

(2) Reorganization of the Health Group's functions.

Because this laboratory is now working on a Peacetime level there are many attitudes that have had to be changed. With the lifting of security and the lack of pressure afforded by the war, employees at this laboratory now have many qualms about the special hazards. It has been necessary for the protection of the contractor and for the morale of the worker to do things which are not absolutely necessary for the protection of the workers health. This office has attempted to make more of a "show." Nurses have been employed in the first aid rooms of outlying sites rather than G.I. first aid men. The nurses help carry out routine health procedures beside making a record of minor accidents and toxic disturbances. There is a plan to put another nurse and aid room in the Tech area to care for minor shop accidents. Now these casualties are cared for at the Post Hospital which is nearby. However, if the new housing plan involves rebuilding the hospital at a different site such an aid room will be necessary. If not, some time may be saved and morale lifted by having a first aid attendant even a few steps closer in the Tech Area.

Another attempt along this line has been to routinize more of our activities. Mr. J.G. Hoffman's Health-Physics group plans are being made to put the distribution, collection, development and recording of film badges on a more routine basis. Equipment and techniques are being developed which will allow this function to go on more automatically. The work can be done by less

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skilled technicians and more records can be obtained. If this works out this office can have actual negative objective results upon which to base its recommendations rather than the statement or opinion of the worker that very little radiation was encountered in his operations. If these methods are routine, enforcement methods will be easier for the varied operations engaged in at this laboratory.

Routine reporting of critical assembly activities to this office has been started. Because of the accidents in this field it was thought that the Health Group should be somehow represented and Louis Slotin agreed after conference to assign one man from his group to report to J.G. Hoffman on monitoring activities.

Likewise activities at Bayo Canyon have been limited by policy which tends to forego the experiment if exposures become high and also limit the amount of material worked with.

The Health-Chemistry group under Wright Langham has attempted to establish a routine method for urine assays for plutonium on all CNR personnel. This has involved decontamination of his laboratory, allocation of hospital space and development of supervision in collection of samples. It is entirely possible that the sensitivity of this assay will make the physical set-up impractical for routine use. This has been the subject of many memos from Langham and it is anticipated that his phase of the work should be moved out of the Tech Area entirely, especially if a new hospital is built. A "milk-route" has been established to obtain specimens from the home of polonium workers because they have been most uncooperative in furnishing them without supervision.

As far as the hematological group is concerned secretarial aid has been obtained to assist in the notification of personnel to report for blood counts. Also routine trips are taken to outlying sites to obtain blood

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specimens so that individual responsibility will be minimized. When adequate personnel is obtained it is anticipated that they will return to the more accurate counting methods.

In summation it is the author's opinion that the great chaos associated with rapid turn over of personnel has made minor administrative matters into major headaches. That attention to the routine methods of checking radiation and personnel will make the whole job easier; will make workers feel more watched-over, and will supply an adequate number of records which will be worthwhile for future reference.

There have been other activities outside these two major categories which have been time consuming and deserve mention.

(1) Cross Roads Activities: Altho this group has had no direct involvement in preparations for this test Dr. Hempelmann, Dr. Nolan, Capt. Large, Dr. Hoffman and Dr. Langham have spent some time on arrangements and conferences.

Dr. Hempelmann with the help of Capt. Large and Drs. Langham and Hoffman gave a 2 weeks course in basic physics and problems of atom bomb tests. Dr. Hempelmann and Dr. Hoffman have made trips to Washington and Rochester for conferences. Col. Warren has been at this Site several times for conference and planning. Drs. Hempelmann, Langham, Large, and Nolan will actually take part in these tests as monitors this summer.

(2) Trinity Activities: Dr. Hoffman's group has taken several trips to the Alamogordo Area to obtain additional information for decay curves on radiation from the 16 July 1945 Test. Dr. Hempelmann has had to study the physiological effects of the radiation on cows purchased from that Area and brought to this Site. Miss Dickie and others of the hematology group have spent a great proportion of their time doing hematological studies on these cows. At this time, however, these activities are practically terminated.

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(3) Experimental Studies: At this time several of the physicians in the Regular Services have returned here until shipping time for the Crossroads Tests. They will aid this office in routine duties such as completing physical examinations, doing radiation and dust surveys and First Aid evaluations. However, to familiarize them with radiation problems, it is contemplated, that they will be given simple radiation experiments to perform. These will be done part-time with the help of the regular staff and will add interest to their work. It is hoped that experiments of this type can be continued on a routine basis by permanent Health Group members.

16 April 1946

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