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SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY • SCHOOL OF NURSING
STRONG MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

DEPARTMENT OF RADIATION BIOLOGY
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August 3, 1984

Dr. J. W. Thiessen
Deputy Associate Director
Office of Health and Environmental Research, ER-71
Office of Energy Research
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

703504

Re: Congressional Investigation into Health and Safety Policies of the
Department of Energy (DOE)

Dear Dr. Thiessen:

In response to Dr. Edington's request for information concerning human experimentation carried out at the Atomic Energy Project at the University of Rochester, we submit a brief description of the only such experimentation known to have been carried out and the enclosed factsheet. We regret the delay in response; the delay resulted from the fact that no records of the experimental work exist in the Biomedical Laboratory or in the University.

The description of the experimental procedures and circumstances of the work were obtained from Professor Louis Hempelmann, now retired, but at that time, the Health and Safety Officer at Los Alamos in Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer's office. Dr. Hempelmann offered the following information:

1. Dr. Stafford Warren, then Chief of the Medical Section, Manhattan District, Oak Ridge, Tenn., under General Leslie Groves, planned and sponsored a project which involved administration of small amounts of plutonium to terminally ill patients, to determine metabolism and distribution of the isotope in humans. The intent was to follow urinary excretion and, at post mortem examination, determine location and quantity of isotopes in tissues.

The protocol involved patients at the Medical Center at Rochester, in Manhattan District facilities at Oak Ridge and, according to Dr. Hempelmann, at least one other Manhattan District Project. The experiments took place as he recalls in 1945 and 1946. The plutonium was administered in a double blind procedure such that the clinical staff did not know which individuals received isotope, and without patient knowledge and consent. The work was administered by Dr. Warren and carried out by private clinical practitioners, but did not involve the Project at Rochester and was not supported financially or administratively by the Manhattan District or its successor, Atomic Energy Project at Rochester.

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FOLDER FS-1 Plutonium

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This human experimentation carried out by Dr. Warren was the subject of a formal review by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1946 (the date according to Dr. Hempelmann); however, no copies of this review report are available. Since the work was not carried out in the Project, no records exist in the Biomedical Laboratory concerning the experimental protocol or patient identity. The University Environmental Health and Safety Officer who has had continuous service in the Atomic Energy Project and the successor laboratory since 1946 has examined the files and has found no record of Dr. Warren's project. The last patient known to have received plutonium in this experiment in 1945 died in early 1983 at age approximately 85 years. The investigators involved in the experimentation, i.e., Dr. Stafford Warren and the Director for the Clinical Research Laboratory, are deceased.

No other instance of human experimentation is known to have occurred in the period February 1, 1943 and July 31, 1984.

Sincerely,



Paul L. La Celle
Professor and Chairman
Department of Radiation Biology
and Biophysics



John B. Richey
Director
Research and Project
Administration

Enclosure

PLL:cj

cc: James S. Robertson
Director, Human Health and Assessments Division
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Information from

ERDA

Washington, D.C. 20545



BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MANHATTAN PROJECT (MED)
INJECTIONS OF PLUTONIUM INTO TERMINAL PATIENTS

The attached Fact Sheet on the injection of 18 patients with plutonium under the World War II Manhattan Projects (MED) was prepared by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1974. (The ERDA inherited the AEC records on this matter when it came into being in 1975).

In 1974, also, the AEC conducted an investigation to determine whether or not the patients had been told the nature of the injections and had given their permission. It was found that the patient injected in 1947 had been informed and had signed a consent agreement in the presence of two doctors. Another patient definitely was not informed but the records on the other 16 patients are unclear.

As a result of the 1974 investigation, the doctors of the four patients alive at that time were contacted and asked to tell the patients of the nature of the MED injections. One was not told because her doctor felt the knowledge would be detrimental to her health. She has since died. The other three patients, all of whom are alive as of February, 1976, were informed.

Since 1974, also, scientific papers have been presented by Drs. Durbin and Rowland on the findings thus far of the follow up studies they have conducted the last several years.

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February, 1976

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