Mancuso file

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THRU: Dr. Goldstein

MEETING SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE HEALTH AND MORTALITY STUDY - OAK RIDGE, OCTOBER 22, 1971

My general impression is that the meeting, as a meeting of an Advisory Committee, was unproductive. One reason for failure was the confusion with regard to the purpose of this meeting. It was not until sometime during the afternoon that Dr. Mancuso explained the specific purpose of the meeting: to advise him and his co-workers whether the data available at this time were of a type suitable for presentation at the meeting of the Health Physics Society.

During the morning session, the presentations were of a general nature on the history of the project and status and future expansion plans of the Hanford part of the study. What I consider strong criticism aimed in general at the nature and quality of data collection came from Dr. Alice Stewart. She compared the data collection methodology with "using electron microscopy to study Mars" and strongly urged perfecting of data quality and the introduction of refinements on the basis of need as demonstrated by results of data manipulation instead of attempting to construct a perfect study. Dr. Sanders' reply to this was that preliminary analysis "deters from collecting more data." Drs. Elston and Stewart questioned also the validity of some of the endpoints selected to determine the health experience of AEC workers. The consensus was that cause of death and life-shortening were critical endpoints and that any "hidden delayed effects other than cancer (such as the one causing early withdrawal from the work force) were highly improbable." Dr. Elston also pointed out to Dr. Sanders that he is not looking at mortality but tries to determine when people in the study die and questioned the value of siblings as a control.

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Dr. Elston discussed some of the statistical aspects of the presentations by Drs. Mancuso, Sanders and Brodsky. He presented some calculations made to determine the expected sensitivity of data manipulation with regard to mortality and life shortening and expressed the opinion that such calculations should have been made before the study was started and should have formed the basis for decisions on data collection, sample size and size of control population, etc. I also had the impression that he could find very little justification for some of the tests applied and urged many more analyses with "valid and more powerful tests" (cost of data analysis is trivial compared to collection costs). He also made the general statement that "before you see any data, you better know you have some good methods to analyze them."

The remainder of the meeting was very uninspiring and concerned mainly a discussion of the suitability of presenting data at the upcoming meeting. From some of the remarks made by the other committee members I got the impression that they looked with great favor on an expansion of the study to cosmic proportions.

In general terms, one overall impression of the meeting was the inability of the investigators (Drs. Mancuso, Sanders and Brodsky) to engage in meaningful in depth discussions with their advisors and their obvious high degree of insecurity as to what to do with the data.

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