



## UNITED STATES TRANSURANIUM REGISTRY

JSTR

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BOX No.

4 of 62.14 TRANSURANIUMFOLDER REGISTRY #1 FEB 5, 1976

Mr. Larry Boston, Editor  
American Medical News  
535 N. Dearborn Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Dear Mr. Boston:

The item in the issue of the American Medical News of June 14, 1976 concerning an increased cancer death rate among plutonium workers was based on an analysis of data collected in the U. S. Transuranium Registry. The analysis by Ralph Nader's Health Research Group was made without consulting previously with personnel of our Registry with respect to the suitability of our data for the type of statistics that they developed. As a matter of fact, the data was not suitable. Mortality rates for cancer or other diseases are valid only if they are based on an unbiased sample. The Transuranium Registry, which collects information concerning the distribution of plutonium in tissues and thereby checks the validity of in vivo estimates of plutonium deposition in workers, makes no pretense to obtaining those cases in an unbiased manner. On the contrary, we know that both investigators and families of workers have been more diligent in obtaining autopsies for cancer cases than for cases of less interest or concern. For that reason, the Health Research Group's comparison of this biased autopsy series with relatively unbiased nationwide mortality rates is unjustified and is likely to lead to erroneous conclusions.

To provide suitable data for the calculation of disease incidence and mortality rates the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) recently started a large epidemiologic study of past and present plutonium workers in the five ERDA facilities where meaningful exposure has occurred. The study, which is coordinated by the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, will provide incidence rates for major diseases among living workers and mortality rates for the deceased. That investigation will be a suitable source of data for the calculation of incidence and mortality rates.

Sincerely,

*W. D. Norwood, M.D.*

W. D. Norwood, M.D.  
Acting Director

1. U. S. Transuranium Registry Study of  
Thirty Autopsies, W. D. Norwood, M.D. and C. E. Newton, Jr.  
with Physics. Pergamon Press 1975, Vol. 28 (June),

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