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intra-laboratory memo

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COLLECTION Files of the Director's Ad Hoc Committee on Human Health Records March 28, 1995
BOX No. _____
FOLDER Comprehensive Search of CTR Box 267

TO: File
FROM: R. A. Schlenker *RAS*
SUBJECT: Comprehensive Search of Box 267
Center for Human Radiobiology Records

This box includes material from three records series: Austin Brues, Radium, and Met Lab. The search was conducted to locate documents that might shed light on ethics policy and practice. Several documents were found that touch on this at least tangentially:

1. Robert J. Hasterlik, M.D. to Dr. Albert Field, July 18, 1951 from a folder entitled "Sources of material, of patents, and information.

The letter proposed the study of persons treated therapeutically with radium. After requesting information on the identities of patients, the letter goes on to say: "We can assure you that the proper ethical doctor-doctor and doctor-patient relationship would be maintained in these studies."

2. Austin M. Brues, M.D. to Norman Hilberry - Deputy Director, June 5, 1951

The memorandum addresses the future of radium studies at ANL. Though ethics is not mentioned it was clearly in the mind of the writer, as were qualifications of the investigators. The memo says: "These persons are all referred to us at the initiative of their personal physicians, who receive reports of our evaluation. All examinations are likewise under the supervision of one of the above-named physicians, all of whom hold staff appointments at the University of Chicago Clinics and hold licenses to practice medicine and surgery in the State of Illinois. No hazardous procedures are involved. Furthermore, these studies are beneficial and important to the welfare of the patients, since proper evaluation of their status is essential to proper medical management. The activities of this group have already resulted in referral of one individual for removal of a malignant tumor."

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3. A group of three letters (a) W. H. Zinn, Director to Warden Ragen, June 2, 1952, (b) Andrew F. Stehney, Group Leader and John F. Rose, Director to Warden Joseph E. Ragen, November 17, 1954, and (c) Norman Hilberry, Deputy Director to Warden Joseph E. Ragen, November 23, 1954.

These three letters express thanks for access to prisoners for human subject studies. Prisoners are a vulnerable group so comments in the letters that might reveal attitudes toward the prisoners and their natural rights are significant. Letter (b) states:

"The contribution of the 50 Stateville inmates who participated in this program should be emphasized. Each volunteer wore a respiratory helmet.... There was no danger of injury to the man, but they could have no food or water and could not smoke during this period. Possibly a greater source of discomfort, however was that while wearing the helmet one could not perform the little acts of comfort, such as blowing his nose, wiping perspiration from his forehead, rubbing his eyes, or scratching an itching nose. They accepted these inconveniences and cooperated admirably, even repeating the test when requested to do so. We believe these men were motivated in large part by a sincere desire to help."

4. Austin M. Brues, M.D., James J. Nickson, M.D. and John E. Rose to Dr. Eugene M. K. Ceiling, October 29, 1946.

This review of statements on a radon ointment shed some light on attitudes toward radiation exposure at the Metallurgical Laboratory. It says:

"It might be pointed out here that indiscriminate distribution of radioactive materials to any individual without regard for his experience in handling radioactive substances, or for his ability to protect the patient or himself from the harmful effects of over-exposure, is a general problem which is, or should be, of concern to the medical profession. The Manhattan District, for example, requires that recipients of radioactive isotopes present evidence of their ability properly to safeguard the persons who may be exposed to the radiations from these materials."