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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

March 7, 1994

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Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Health
Washington DC 20201

MEMORANDUM TO RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

FROM: Co-Chairs of the Public Health Service Radiation Studies Working Group

SUBJECT: Human Radiation Experiments: Records for the Period 1944 through
May 30, 1974--ACTION

It has recently become widely known that the Federal Government conducted and/or supported experiments in which human subjects were intentionally exposed to ionizing radiation, sometimes without their consent. Although most, if not all, such experiments occurred twenty or more years ago, this is nevertheless a matter of the utmost concern to the Administration and to the public. Accordingly, the President established the Human Radiation Interagency Working Group to identify and report on such experiments conducted between 1944 and May 30, 1974. This Department and others have been asked to establish procedures for locating, and subsequently retrieving and inventorying records of human radiation experiments conducted either directly by HHS or through an HHS contract or grant. HHS agencies are now engaged in the first step of this process; namely, identifying relevant records in our possession or custody.

Based on the long-term relationship between HHS and your institution, you may have received an HHS grant or contract to conduct or participate in human radiation experiments during the period in question. We anticipate that further review of our records will enable us to identify which institution in fact received HHS funds for such experiments. When this information becomes available we will be in touch with relevant institutions to discuss what additional steps should be taken.

In the interim, we are asking that all addressees take steps to preserve and retain any records they may have that pertain to human radiation experimentation. We are concerned that no files or records related to this subject be destroyed or otherwise disposed of, even if these files would normally be destroyed under an existing records disposition schedule.

We urge your cooperation to ensure that your organization preserves all pertinent records in your custody or possession. When we have better information on which institutions may have been involved, we will issue further guidance.

We appreciate your assistance in this important task. Please contact either of us if you have any questions.

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Human Subjects Project

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