

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

2101 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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March 2, 1943.

Dr. Ross G. Harrison, Chairman,
 National Research Council,
 2101 Constitution Avenue,
 Washington, D. C.

My dear Doctor Harrison:-

In your letter of yesterday you ask four specific questions regarding the proposal that human volunteers be used in experiments to determine chemotherapeutic prophylaxis in gonorrhea. I shall answer the questions as follows:-

1. Dr. Moore's letter should be viewed as the statement of the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases but it represents the viewpoints of the members of the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee at its meeting December 1, 1942 passed, without dissenting vote, the following resolution:-

"That human experimentation in the prophylaxis of gonorrhea is desirable in prison inmates through the cooperation of State authorities.....The details of such experimentation and its risks should be drawn up by a conference, the personnel of which shall be selected by the Chairman, Subcommittee of Venereal Diseases. The proposals of Dr. Charles M. Carpenter, Rochester, N. Y., and Alfred M. Cohn, New York City, informally submitted to the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases on December 1, 1942, shall be approved in principle, subject to qualifications arrived at by the conference authorized above."

This conference was held in Rochester, New York, January 20 - 21, 1943, and the minutes of the conference record the following:-

"The sense of the present Conference was that such experimentation was urgently desirable and should be carried out as promptly as possible."

2. The above quotations from the official records show that the specific recommendation for the use of prisoners represented an unanimous action by the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases on December 1, 1942. The recommendation of the Subcommittee went forward to the Committee on Medicine, in the form of approval of proposals for

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contract by the Committee on Medical Research.

3. Representatives of the Surgeon General of both Army and Navy were present at all meetings of the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases and at the Rochester conference. The attitude expressed by these liaison officers from Army and Navy was that the proposed experimentation could not be carried out on volunteers from the armed forces because of the following reasons: - (a) interference with training program, (b) impossibility of assuring continence and avoidance of all sexual intercourse for six months' period, (c) impossibility of guaranteeing no change in station of the volunteers, (d) impossibility of instituting experimental procedures in armed forces when protective measures are withheld, (e) impossibility of deliberately exposing military personnel to infection even when volunteering, (f) impossibility of determining exposure rate of military personnel, (g) military personnel may be employed only for observation and not for deliberate experimentation.

I feel sure that if the experiment is not done in prisoners, the Army and Navy will still consider it unexpedient to conduct the experiment.

4. The resolution and recommendation of the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases were transmitted to the Committee on Medicine and at the meeting of this main committee on December 10, 1942, Dr. Moore presented the matter from the standpoint of the Subcommittee on Venereal Diseases. The following note is recorded in the minutes of this meeting: -

"After hearing an explanation of the urgent need of this program by Chairman Moore of the Subcommittee and after a full discussion of the volunteer basis of this project, the Committee on Medicine unanimously voted its approval of this recommendation."

I hope that the questions propounded in your letter are answered by the information given in the foregoing paragraphs. I may say also that within the last week or so the Commissioner of Federal Prisons has become much interested in the undertaking and has agreed to make certain prison-groups available for solicitation as volunteers. The Commissioner and Dr. Moore are to see the Attorney General within the next few days, to ascertain if there are legal difficulties in carrying out the proposed experiment in Federal prisons.

Very sincerely,

Signed: Lewis H. Weed

Dr. Lewis H. Weed, Chairman,
Division of Medical Sciences