

Item ID Number 01436

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Report/Article Title Press Release: A National Association of State Agent Orange Programs was founded today in Boston, February 22, 1987

Journal/Book Title

Year 0000

Month/Day

Color

Number of Images 18

Description Notes Attachments to press release include program for National Conference on State Agent Orange Programs and a New York Times article on the association

Contact: Joe Bangert

February 22, 1987

Director, Massachusetts Agent Orange Program(617) 727-⁵⁹⁴²0578

A national association of state Agent Orange Programs was founded today in Boston at the concluding meeting of a national conference at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

A majority of state's attending the two-day conference of state Agent Orange Programs agreed today to establish the national association to coordinate efforts, to conduct joint health studies in new areas, to avoid duplication of studies and efforts and to take a pivotal role in initiating a concerted, coordinated national effort to provide the necessary legal, administrative, medical and social services to Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

The immediate goal is to pressure the federal government to recognize the significance of the medical evidence and the effects Agent Orange has had and is still having on Vietnam veterans and their offspring.

Both program administrators and scientists attending the conference believe there is a danger that the federal government will terminate the congressionally mandated health studies in July of this year.

"We are here to serve notice on the federal government that their days of footdragging are over," said Joe Bangert, director of the Massachusetts Agent Orange Program and member of the Steering Committee of the newly formed organization.

The association plans to bring the issue of Agent Orange before the upcoming national conference of Vietnam veteran state legislators to be held in Boston March 27-29.

The conference was sponsored by the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences and the Commonwealth's Office of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services.

Conference Participants

- r. David Weisbaum, Illinois House of Representatives
- r. James Harbison, Delaware Commission of Veterans' Affairs
- rs. Jane Dzedzic, Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Victims, Inc.
- r. Daniel Williams, Michigan Department of Health
- r. John W. Moulton, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs
- r. Jack Mordente, Connecticut Vietnam Herbicides Information Commission
- r. Jeffrey Olson, Deputy Commissioner, State of Minnesota, Department of Veterans' Affairs
- r. Wayne Wilson, New Jersey State Commission on Agent Orange
- r. Douglas Taylor, New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs
- r. David Foehr, Rhode Island Veterans' Home
- r. Samuel M. Black, Veterans' Administration, Division of War Claims, Virginia
- r. Chuck Conroy, Director, Agent Orange Program, West Virginia Department of Health
- r. Terry Hertzler, Vietnam Herbicide Information Center, Harrisburg, PA
- Colonel John P. Siemer, Director, Governor's Office of Veterans' Affairs, Columbus, OH
- r. Jack G. Devine, Michigan Veterans' Trust Fund
- r. Daniel E. Karnes, Commission on Veterans Affairs, Commonwealth of Virginia
- r. David Bradley, Vietnam Veterans of America, Columbus, OH
- r. Craig Close, Agent Orange Commission of Rhode Island
- r. Sam Asseyo, Oklahoma Department of Veterans' Affairs
- r. Allen J. Lynch, Chief of Veterans' Advocacy, Illinois Attorney General's Office
- r. Michael Hahn, Executive Director, Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, Florida

Conference Coordinators

- r. Paul Atwood, The William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, University of Massachusetts at Boston
- r. Joe Bangert, Agent Orange Program Director, Office of the Commissioner for Veterans' Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

National Conference of State Agent Orange Programs



Hosts and Sponsors

The William Joiner Center for the Study of War
and Social Consequences
University of Massachusetts at Boston

and

The Office of the Commissioner of Veterans' Services
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

February 20-22, 1987

Conference Presenters

Dr. Theodor Sterling	Simon Frazier University	British Columbia
Dr. Joseph Bangert	Agent Orange Program	Massachusetts
Dr. Tod Ensign	"Citizen Soldier"	New York, NY
Dr. Robert Diefenbach	Center for Disease Control	Atlanta, GA
Dr. Maureen Hatch	Columbia University	New York, NY
Dr. Lennart Hardell	Umea University Hospital	Umea, Sweden
Dr. Mikeal Ericson	Umea University	Umea, Sweden
Dr. Peter Kahn	Agent Orange Commission	New Jersey
Dr. Arnold Schecter	Fat Biopsy Study	Massachusetts
Dr. Peter Schuck	Georgetown University	Washington, D.C.
Dr. Barclay Shepard	Veterans' Administration	Washington, D.C.
Dr. Keith Snyder	Vietnam Veterans of America	Washington, D.C.
Dr. Wayne Wilson	Agent Orange Commission	New Jersey
Dr. Sheila Hoar Zahm	National Cancer Institute	Bethesda, MD
Dr. John Constable	Massachusetts General Hospital	Boston, MA
Dr. Seymour Leventman	Boston College	Boston, MA
Dr. Matthew Meselson	Harvard University	Cambridge, MA
Dr. Robert Baughman	Harvard Medical School	Cambridge, MA
Dr. Alan Goosetray	Massachusetts General Hospital	Boston, MA
Dr. Bart Stichman	Vietnam Veterans of America	Washington, D.C.
Dr. Dermot Duggan	OCVS	Boston, MA
Dr. Dick Christian	Pentagon	Washington, D.C.
Dr. Mary Stout	Vietnam Veterans of America	Washington, D.C.
Senator Francis D. Doris	Massachusetts General Court	Boston, MA
Dr. Allen Falk	Agent Orange Commission	New Jersey
Dr. Chuck Conroy	Agent Orange Program	West Virginia
Dr. Terry Hertzler	Vietnam Herbicide Info Ctr.	Harrisburg, PA

Program of Events

Friday February 20	6-8 pm	Reception, hosted by Mayor of Boston Raymond L. Flynn, Parkman House
Saturday February 21	8:30 am	Shuttle Transportation from 250 Stuart Street, Boston to Harbor Campus, University of Massachusetts at Boston
	9:00 am	Continental Breakfast, Faculty Club, 11th Floor, Healey Library
	9:15 am	Opening Remarks: John Halachis, Commissioner of Veterans' Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Kevin Bowen, Co-Director, William Joiner Center
		"Scientific and Medical Aspects of Agent Orange and Other Chemicals Used During the Vietnam War"
		<i>Convener:</i> Dr. John Constable
	9:30 am	A Historical Overview of the Issue of Agent Orange
	10:00 am	Dioxin, Reproductive Illness, and Cancer — The Evidence from Vietnam and the United States
	10:30 am	Dioxin Animal Studies
	11:00 am	Phenoxy Herbicides and Human Cancer
	11:50 am	Recent Human Dioxin Studies
	12:30 pm	Agent Orange and the Government's Response
	12:50 pm	Luncheon with Guest Speaker Senator John F. Kerry
		"Legal and Bureaucratic Aspects of Agent Orange"
		<i>Convener:</i> Dr. Seymour Leventman
	2:00 pm	Federal Responsibility — Status Report from the Veterans' Administration
	2:30 pm	Agent Orange Lawsuit — Status of Appeal
	3:30 pm	Agent Orange and Advocacy
	4:30 pm	State Initiatives on Agent Orange
	6:00 pm	Conference Banquet
		Remarks: Charles Desmond, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, UMass/Boston
		Keynote Speaker: Elmo Zumwalt III
	8:30 pm	Shuttle to Park Plaza Hotel, Boston
Sunday February 22	8:30 am	Continental Breakfast, Downtown Campus
	9:30 am	Open Discussion: Future Course of Action and Collaboration
	12:30 pm	Press Conference



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

University of Massachusetts-Boston

Harbor Campus

Boston, Massachusetts 02125-3393

**THE WILLIAM JOINER CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES**

March 10, 1987

Major Max Tenberg
U.S. Army and Joint Services Environmental Studies Group
1730 K Street, N.W., Room 210
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Major Tenberg:

On behalf of the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, I extend thanks and appreciation for your participation in the National Conference of State Agent Orange Programs. The success of the conference and future initiatives which grow out of the national organization are attributable to your commitment and that of the other participants.

Enclosed are a list of all conference presenters and participants and a questionnaire regarding the organization of the conference. We would appreciate your taking the time to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the Joiner Center as well as checking the addresses and phone numbers for accuracy and completeness. Please forward any corrections or additions to the list to us.

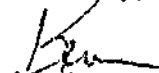
As you might have been aware during the conference, the local media coverage was significant. Also, enclosed please find a copy of the piece which subsequently appeared in The New York Times of March 1, 1987. A longer, analytical piece is expected to be published in The Nation in the near future.

Finally, just to remind you, the National Conference of Vietnam Era Veterans in State Legislatures is March 27-29, 1987 here at the University. We would appreciate it if you could insure that your state has representation.

Be assured that the Joiner Center is committed to and willing to work for the joint efforts of various programs and the national association which emerged from the conference. Feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance to you or your program.

Again, thanks for your participation.

Sincerely,


Kevin Bowen
Co-Director
William Joiner Center

enclosures

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State's Agent Orange Aides Join Others to Unify Efforts

By JANET GARDNER

BOSTON

MEMBERS of New Jersey's Agent Orange Commission have joined their counterparts in 10 other states to form a national association designed to coordinate efforts to provide medical, social and legal services to Vietnam veterans exposed to the herbicide.

"We need to have a united force to let the Federal Government know what is taking place at the state level," said Wayne P. Wilson, executive director of the New Jersey State Commission on Agent Orange, at a meeting last weekend at the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts.

About 70 scientists and medical and legal experts, as well as administrators of veterans' programs, shared the results of their research and discussed collaborating on other studies in the face of what they called "Federal foot-dragging."

"I personally don't need an association of states to criticize the Veterans Administration," said Mr. Wilson.

He is a member of the steering committee of the new organization, which, he said, would monitor the activities of the V.A., a task, Mr. Wilson said, "no state can take on by itself."

Joseph Bangert, director of Agent Orange programs in Massachusetts, added:

"The action will come from Washington. The groundswell has to come from the states."

It became known during the session that Dr. Barclay Shepard, director of the V.A.'s Agent Orange Projects Office, had been told that his contract would not be renewed when it expired July 1.

Dr. Peter C. Kahn, a principal investigator in New Jersey's study of dioxin in blood and adipose tissue and director of research of the state's Agent Orange Commis-

sion, called this "a downgrading of Agent Orange research by the Veterans Administration."

In a subsequent telephone interview, Dr. Shepard, who spoke at the conference, said he did not believe his being let go was "a signal of anything in particular, except that I have to move on."

Dr. Alvin Young, senior policy analyst for life sciences at the White House Office of Science and Technology, said that "replacing Dr. Shepard shouldn't impact the studies."

The Federal Government, through the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, has completed about eight major epidemiological studies at a cost of more than \$100 million, but not all have been published.

With an appropriation of \$350,000, Massachusetts is conducting several research projects, including a new study of veterans that confirms New Jersey's findings.

In fat biopsies of 25 veterans 15 to 20 years after they left Vietnam, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital found levels of dioxin as high as 10 times the average amount. The research team, headed by Dr. Arnold Schecter, a professor at the State University of New York in Binghamton, plans to test 25 more men.

"It's a very sophisticated test, and a test we didn't have five years ago," Dr. Schecter said. "We still don't know how extensive the health effects are in humans, but this new test should allow us to find out with time."

Time is critical because dioxin has a half life of about five years, Dr. Schecter said, adding: "The longer we wait, the less chance we'll have of finding Agent Orange in the bodies of these veterans."

In 1984, before the \$180 million settlement for the 245,000 veterans who were party to a class-action suit against manufacturers of Agent Orange, Federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the Eastern District of New York said that there was no evidence that the herbicide had any effect on humans other than causing the skin disease clo-

Continued on Page 10

Agent Orange Panels Unite

Continued From Page 1

rachne, and that it thus would be difficult to compensate individuals. The settlement has been appealed by the Vietnam Veterans of America.

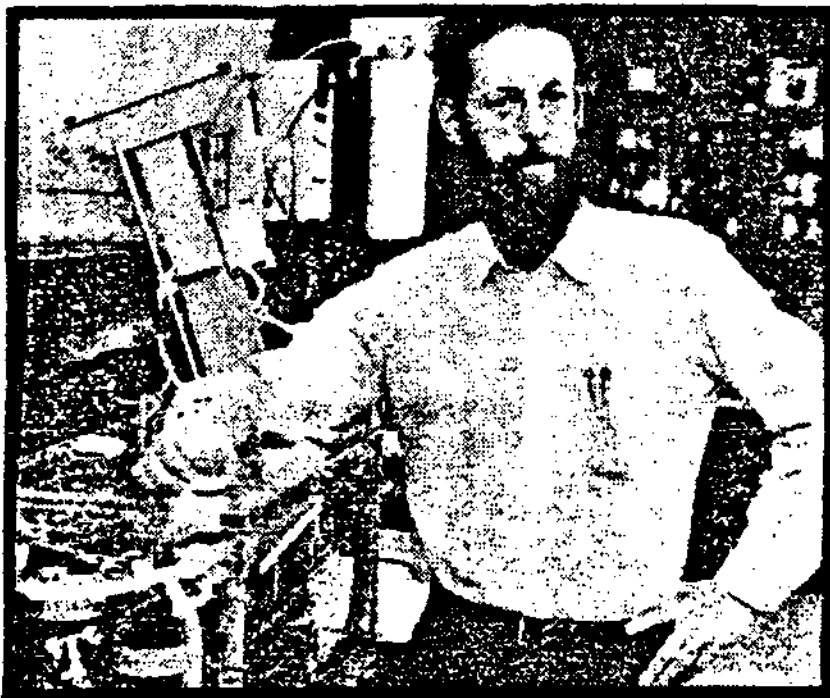
Scientists now cite a study by Dr. Sheila Hoar Zahm of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md., showing that 2,4-D, a major component of Agent Orange, caused cancer among farmers in Kansas. She presented her evidence, published in 1984, at the conference here.

Last fall, Dr. Kahn, associate professor of biochemistry at Rutgers University, and Dr. Michael Gochfeld, a professor of preventive medicine at the Robert Wood Johnson University Medical School in Piscataway, announced the findings of a pilot study sponsored by the New Jersey Agent Orange Commission and financed by the State Legislature.

It included a total of 27 veterans: 10 who had been heavily exposed, a control group of 10 who served in Vietnam, but were minimally exposed, and 7 who did not go to Vietnam. Military records were used to confirm claims of exposure.

The mean level of dioxin in blood for Vietnam-era veterans was 4.3 parts per trillion, the highest being 7.3. For the minimally exposed, the mean was 6.6 parts per trillion. The mean for those exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam was 41 parts per trillion in fat and 46 in blood.

This was considered compelling evidence by the researchers because the body burden of those exposed to the herbicide, which contains 2,3,7,8 Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, was 10 times higher than for the two other groups.



The New York Times/F.N. Kinney

Dr. Peter C. Kahn, a principal investigator in the state's study of dioxin, in his Cook College laboratory.

The blood samples were coded by number and analyzed in a laboratory at the University of Umea in Sweden.

New Jersey has spent about \$400,000 on the study since it was begun in 1985. Governor Kean has included an appropriation of \$225,000 in his proposed 1988 budget.

State Senator Richard Van Wagner, Democrat of the 13th District (Monmouth and parts of Middlesex Counties), has introduced a bill to appropriate \$675,000 to complete the study.

Researchers plan to test a larger number of veterans and are now completing a study of the physiological and psychological effects of dioxin on the men already tested.

A second bill would appropriate \$2 million to set up a laboratory at either Rutgers University or the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark to apply the research on dioxin to a civilian population.

Dr. Kahn said that his study was titled "The Pointman Project" because Vietnam veterans were the advance men for other citizens in the industrialized world who carried in their body fat an average of 5 to 10 parts per trillion of dioxin.

Dioxin is a known animal carcinogen, he said, and there is increasing evidence it is a human carcinogen.

"If what we are seeing, by way of health problems in Vietnam veterans, does prove to be related to their Agent Orange exposure," Dr. Kahn

said, "then the Vietnam veteran may be acting as pointman for us all."

Some critics, including Dr. Shepard, would like more veterans tested because of the possibility of variables in a small sample.

The long-awaited study by the Centers for Disease Control contains three components: the "Vietnam Experience" study published last month, a study of four types of cancer and the Agent Orange exposure study.

The last involved sorting through the military records of 18,000 veterans to compare 9,000 who served in Vietnam with 9,000 who served elsewhere. Military records are used to match times and places the herbicide was sprayed.

"There were not accurate records on who was in the sub-units, which were widely dispersed," Dr. Shepard said. "So in every instance, it was impossible to determine who was exposed."

Because of this uncertainty, the researchers are conducting what they call an "exposure validation study" to see if the dioxin in blood correlates with military records.

"If a soldier was within half a kilometer on the day of the spraying, we call that a wet hit," Dr. Shepard said.

If 20 such incidents can be documented, he said, "we'd consider the soldier highly likely to be exposed."

Because military officials issued orders for troops not to be that close

to an area being sprayed, "it's going to be hard to find enough subjects close to spraying missions," Dr. Shepard said.

Dr. Kahn said that he had confidence in the Centers for Disease Control's researchers but felt that the Federal exposure study was bound to fail because of the way military records were being used.

Other scientists believe it is not necessary to know where a veteran was in Vietnam for such a study of dioxin because the toxic chemical has entered the food chain.

Dr. Matthew Meselson, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at Harvard University and the first scientist to raise the question of health concerns surrounding veterans' exposure to Phenoxy herbicides, said:

"A man with a desk job who ate fish from the Dong Nai River could get a lot of dioxin in his system. The so-called exposed and control group may not be different.

"Whether or not there are serious health effects from human exposure to Agent Orange we still don't know, but finally we're on the track to finding out."

"All the money from the start was misdirected," Dr. Meselson added.

Dr. Schechter said, "the studies are coming together now," citing an additional study of dioxin in Vietnam veterans completed by Dr. Michael Gross of the University of Nebraska, a study that confirmed his and Dr. Kahn's conclusions.

"I think the new evidence in the last five years shows that Agent Orange and thus, dioxin, did get into the bodies of some Vietnam veterans, and there's new evidence, based on the Kansas study, showing that the components of Agent Orange do cause cancer in humans," Dr. Schechter said.

The newly formed association plans to write its by-laws next month and hold a second conference within six months. It also expects to attract more members from a pool of 26 states that once had Agent Orange commissions.

In addition to New Jersey, states represented in the new association are Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Virginia, Delaware, Ohio and Oklahoma. Other states are expected to join. ■