

October 11, 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN SLABORS
 COMMISSIONER PALFREY
 COMMISSIONER RABET
 COMMISSIONER TAFT

THROUGH GENERAL MANAGER

SUBJECT: RECENT INFORMATION ON THYROID DISEASE IN THE
 MARSHALLESE ISLANDS

Dr. Robert A. Conrad of the Medical Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, has just returned from an interim visit to the Marshall Islands to check on possible further development of thyroid abnormalities in the Rongelapese accidentally exposed to fallout on March 1, 1954. He was accompanied by Dr. J. E. Hall, a consultant thyroid specialist of the National Institutes of Health.

It will be recalled that, as of mid-summer, benign nodules had been found in a total of five adolescents exposed at ages of two to seven years; one adult female, forty-one years old, had been found to have a malignant nodule. All successfully underwent surgery for removal of the abnormal tissue. Attached is a copy of our July 12, 1965, memorandum to you describing the successful surgery for two children and the adult.

During the current August examination, nodules were found in three additional adolescents and two adults. The contours of the thyroids of two more adolescents, two young adults, and one man approaching middle age were sufficiently different from normal to cause Drs. Conrad and Hall to describe them as questionable.

To summarize, there are now eleven of eighty-two Marshallese with definite abnormalities of their thyroid tissues and five more are considered questionably so.

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The non-exposed control population continues to be free of nodular thyroid disease. This extremely high incidence of thyroid disease in the exposed population must be considered the result of their exposure to fallout. Dr. Conrad and his group will return to Rongelap in February 1966. Meanwhile, therapy with synthetic thyroid hormone has been instituted in an effort to control further nodule formation. Surgery is being arranged for the five new cases of nodular thyroid disease.

You will be kept informed as this develops further. Obviously, there are many aspects to these findings which will excite both medical and lay interests.

C. L. Dunham, M.D.
Director
Division of Biology and Medicine

Attachment:
Memo dated 7/12/65

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