

Doctors Ask About Adrenal Glands

Kennedy Autopsy Questioned

By JOHN TROAN

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WASHINGTON — How bad were President Kennedy's adrenal glands, those vital hormone factories that straddle the

spine? This question, once a point of debate, was used again in the journal of the American Medical Association.

The issue first came up in 1964, when a group of doctors in California demanded access to the autopsy report. The autopsy was performed at Bethesda Naval Hospital the night after Kennedy's assassination. Some critics of



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the post-mortem examination, including those dealing with the condition of the adrenals, weren't turned over to the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination — on grounds they had nothing to do with the shooting.

This was ascertained through inquiries prompted by three critical letters published in today's AMA journal.

The letters were from physicians in California, Florida and Kentucky. They noted there had been controversy over Kennedy's adrenals, and they bewailed failure of the official autopsy report released by the commission to shed any light on this.

Dr. R. M. Felling, of Santa Barbara, Calif., questioned the "thoroughness" of the autopsy,

"One can only assume from the report," he wrote, "that a pair of organs we all would be most interested in knowing about was to difficult to find—namely, the adrenals.

"Such a pity to have been so close to the answer to a medical query much talked about both by lay and professional people before, during and after the administration of President John F. Kennedy and not to have found even a smidgen of adrenal tissue to answer this perplexing, curious and intriguing problem."

At Bethesda Naval Hospital, Commander J. Thornton Boswell, one of the pathologists who performed the autopsy, said a complete report was turned over to Rear Admiral George G. Burkley, the White

House physician, "and he released what he felt he should." Dr. Boswell said he was "not at liberty" to say anything more. Dr. Burkley said:

"All information pertinent to the assassination was made available to the Warren Commission. The detailed medical records are now in a repository and will be released at an appropriate time."

He declined further comment. The question of Kennedy's physical fitness first cropped up on the eve of the 1960 Democratic convention when some of his political opponents charged he was suffering from Addison's disease.

This is a disorder of the adrenal glands, which manufacture cortisone and other life-sustaining hormones.