

FORT DETRICK: A

Project Whitecoat

By Richard

Symbol Of Crisis

Draws Reactions

Lebherz

As if the emotional and moral reaction of the American public were not enough to be confronted with by Fort Detrick, the Post, has an added problem, the use of human volunteers by the U. S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. Colonel Dan Crozier, Commanding Officer of the U.S. Research Unit says, "Yes, I do realize that by having our Medical Unit here at Fort Detrick, we are placing ourselves in a difficult position, but our position is mainly geographical. We are here because in many respects it is more convenient for us. The only defense that we have at present in this country against an enemy's biological attack is purely a medical matter, although there is work being done here at the present time on a warning system. What is essentially our mission here? If you take it out of the biological warfare context, our mission is to investigate and treat infectious diseases."

In order for infectious diseases to be controlled and treated - experiments are necessary. Usually, at Detrick early experiments are made on mice, guinea pigs, and rhesus monkeys imported from India. Eventually, the experiment has to find its way up to human beings in order to test a vaccine's reliability and effectiveness, and also to test the violence of a micro-organism for its behavior.

Today there are very few adults who have lived through the onslaught of the Nazi Empire and who are not able to remember the shock by simply closing their eyes and saying the words: Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Ravensbruck. Before their eyes, the dreadful sights the Allied Armies exposed about the Nazi Regime in Germany automatically appears. The endless stacks of corpses caused General Eisenhower to turn away with sheer horror in his eyes. The revelation that the Nazis had been experimenting by force on Soviet prisoners, on Polish slave labor, with typhus and poisons, stunned the World's sensibilities. Moral indignation reached a fever pitch.

Because of the decadency that was discovered in these medical experiments, doctors who participated in them were brought before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, judged and sentenced. Out of this situation came the "Nuremberg Code" with its ten points which made permissible throughout the world medical experiments. The ten points are as follows:

1) The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent, should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching, or other ulterior forms of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision.

2) The subject should be such as to yield the fruitful results for the good of society, unprocureable by other methods or means of study, and not random and unnecessary in nature.

3) The experiments should be so designed and based on the results of animal experimentation and a knowledge of the natural history of the disease or other problems under study that the anticipated results will justify the performance of the experiment.

4) The experiment should be so conducted as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.

5) No experiment should be conducted where there is a priori reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur; except, perhaps, in those experiments where the experimental physicians also serve as subjects.

6) The degree of risk to be taken should never exceed that determined by the humanitarian importance of the problem to be solved by the experiment.

7) Proper preparation should be made and adequate facilities provided to protect the experiment subject against even remote possibilities of injury, disability or death.

8) The experiments should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons.

9) During the course of the experiment the human subject should be at liberty to bring the experiment to an end if he has reached the physical and mental state where continuation of the experiment seems to him to be impossible.

10) During the course of the experiment the scientist in charge must be prepared to terminate the experiment at any stage, if he has probable cause to believe, in the exercise of good faith, superior skill and careful judgement required

of him that a continuation of the experiment is likely to result in injury, disability, or death to the experimental subject.

Colonel Crozier claims that all of these points are adhered to, not only for moral reasons, but because if anything should happen to any of the human volunteers, he knows that the outcry would be magnified a thousands times and played up the matter in the press as Seymour Hersh has done.

In the New York Times Magazine Section of Sept. 23th, 1969, Hersh in an article entitled "Dare We develop Biological Weapons?" makes these statements: "Most of the volunteers are recruited from within the Army - usually by means of inducements which are forbidden by Army regulations. . . ." He also recounts a statement by a "young soldier who spent three weeks at Fort Detrick as a volunteer in 1963" as saying in a private letter. "At the beginning of the project," says the soldier, "we had been examined by the director. . . Each of us queried him as to the value of this particular project, however, we learned exactly what he wanted us to know and that was nothing."

"You know," says Colonel Crozier, "Seymour Hersh has never been in our Medical Unit. I was talking to him by phone from Washington only the other day, and I tried to get him to come up and see for himself."

"Is it true that you offer the volunteers inducements?"

"Absolutely not," he affirms. "These men come into the Army for exactly two years, and they are treated like any other soldier is treated."

I asked the Medical officer to explain how volunteers are recruited.

"Well," he says, "to begin with, we have draftees who have been officially declared to be 1-AO by the Army, which means that these men, because of religious belief, will not pick up a weapon to kill another man. They are sent down to the Medical Training Center in Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio. I go down there twice a year. I explain the program to them in two steps. First, I explain it to them in a group. Then individually if they are interested. There is absolutely no coercion.

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I tell them of our objectives in our program, of the risks, of the advantages and the disadvantages. An advantage would be that they would be able to spend their two years here in one location with us. The disadvantage would be obvious. There are risks in this program. There is no denying it. And what is even more important. . . we promise them absolutely nothing for coming into it. And there is no extra pay by the way. These men know exactly what they are in for."

"Now," he goes on, "I return the next day. The men are in smaller groups, and I read them "White Coat Project." Most of our volunteers know about us anyway, especially the Seventh Day Adventists. They sometimes have had relatives who have been in "Whitecoat" so they know what we do and what our program is all about. I answer individual questions. They usually want to know if there might be any after-effects. Of course, we can't give them a definite answer on that question because if we knew the results of what we are doing, we wouldn't need them as volunteers."

If one of the soldiers volunteers at Fort Sam Houston into the program, he must sign the following statement:

A program of investigation conducted by the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, Fort Detrick, Maryland has been explained to me. I understand this program consists of studies dealing with various aspects of infectious diseases including nature of the infection, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment, and that studies in volunteers are essential for a complete evaluation of these processes. I further understand that such volunteers may become ill and that the program is not without hazard. My signature below indicates my desire to participate in PROJECT WHITECOAT, to be assigned to the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, and to participate in these volunteer studies, with the following three provisions:

- 1) That prior to the actual control conduct of a study full details of my part in the program will be given to me.
- 2) That after this more detailed explanation, I may withdraw from the study without prejudice.
- 3) That I will not be required to participate in studies which,

in themselves, are contrary to my religious or moral precepts.

Once this document is signed by the volunteer, he is then sent directly to Fort Detrick, and into the Medical Unit there.

The volunteer may be a part of the program for months before he is actually used on a Project. He will be functioning until then as a clerk in an office, or even as an orderly in the hospital. He will still be a soldier, performing as a soldier in the daily routines of the unit.

When a project or an experiment comes up, which may only take two or three weeks of his entire time during his two year Army stint, usually around 24 volunteers are brought into a conference room, then Colonel Crozier, personally explains exactly and in detail what the project is about.

"And I explain it in layman's terms," he says emphatically, "because I want them to understand it completely."

Crozier hands me a memographed group of papers which is a history of a Project that has actually been tested.

On the front of the paper it says: TO STUDY IN HUMANS THE INFLUENCE OF SANDFLY FEVER ON WORK PERFORMANCE, MUSCULAR FUNCTIONS AND SELECTED CLINICAL LABORATORY MEASUREMENTS.

It was submitted by the Chief of the Medical Division and approved by Colonel Crozier.

Inside the Project, the primary objectives are reported on. There is a history given on the project, along with, in this case, the clinical manifestations of the Sandfly Fever, and its symptoms on the person infected by it.

There is information on the materials to be used in the experiment and the exact methods that will be used. Next there is a history of the background of the particular virus being used in this particular experiment, of how it was obtained.

There is a detailed description of what has already been learned about Sandfly Fever, and what is anticipated in regards to the upcoming Project the volunteers may be involved in.

Before the volunteer consents to become a part of this particular Project, he must again read and sign the following document:

I, (and he gives his name) without duress and of my own free will, do hereby consent to participate in a research study conducted by physicians of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, Fort Detrick, Frederick, Maryland involving (and the Project is named and the disease described)

The implications of such a study have been explained to me. I understand that an element of risk is involved in this procedure.

I understand that this is an approved research study and as such will be recorded in official files of the Department of the Army. Any medical problems arising from my participation in this study will be considered to have been unincurred in line of duty. I also understand that no additional rights against the government will accrue from my having participated as a volunteer.

There must be two witnesses to the volunteer's signature. "If the men don't want to volunteer for a particular project," explains Col. Crozier, "we let him wait until another one comes up. And another thing, if after a volunteer gets up here and finds that he doesn't want to participate in our program, we, of course, see that he is sent out of the unit right away."

I ask if I may talk to one of the volunteers. The one the Colonel had in mind can't be found, so one at random is brought in. The colonel leaves, because he feels the interview situation would be easier.

The volunteer that is sitting across from me is Specialist 4 Albert L. Wyand. He is a Seventh Day Adventist and he lives in Silver Springs, Md. with his wife.

I ask Specialist Wyand to explain to me exactly how he was

recruited at Fort Sam Houston to be a part of this medical program. He tells me in effect what Colonel Crozier has already told me about being talked to in a group, then in smaller groups, and then alone.

Wyand is tall, husky, wears black-rimmed glasses and seems to be remarkably healthy.

"What were your basic reasons for becoming a volunteer?"

"Well," he grins, "I really had two reasons for wanting to get into this program. You see, I live in Silver Springs and I knew that if I came up here, I would be able to stay here for my full two years. My second reason was more personal. I had friends who had been in this unit, and to be honest with you, I felt that if there were other Americans in Viet Nam risking their lives for me, why, maybe I could do something for them." Then he hesitated. "I also happen to think it is an honor in being able to do something that will help other people. I don't think of myself as a guinea pig. And as I said, if there are men in Viet Nam dying for me, this is the least I can do to save them."

"Were you in any way induced or forced to enter this particular program, Specialist Wyand?" I ask him.

"Definitely not!" he replies.

Just before I leave Colonel Crozier's office, the officer says "You can't take our volunteers and isolate them like so much of the press has done. They must be looked at through the whole concept of man's defense against infectious disease both in our everyday life, and in our only defense against a biological warfare attack against this country. This is all we have at the moment. And we here at Detrick are the major ones working in this area."

(Part III: In Search of an Alarm System) will appear on Nov. 10th.