

GIs Not Warned About LSD

By Fred S. Hoffman
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A top Army medical research official said today that soldiers who took part in drug tests were not told in advance that they would be swallowing LSD.

Dr. Van M. Sim, a civilian medical research director at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal in northeast Maryland, said such advance information might have prejudiced the results of the experiments.

Sim defended the LSD experiments, conducted between 1956 and 1967, as a necessary part of study of a variety of chemicals and drugs that might pose potential problems for the Army and the civilian population.

The interest of the researchers, he said, was in methods of detection and treatment.

Sim said there are no tests with human subjects now under way involving drugs, but that he is awaiting clearance from the Army surgeon-general on further experiments.

He was vague on just what drugs are to be tested next, but he indicated that one of them is a nerve gas antidote called atropin.

Sim said the 585 persons, most of them soldiers but some civilians, who were given LSD were all volunteers and were screened in advance by doctors and psychiatrists.

He was less certain about roughly 900 persons the Army said were involved in tests conducted by universities and private institutions under Army contract. He was not even certain of the number 900, saying that the names and other specifics were in the hands of the research institutions, which has full responsibility for their work.

Asked at a Pentagon news conference whether Army volunteers were told ahead of time that they would be ingesting LSD, Sim replied:

"One of the things that you do not tell a subject when they go on any type of drug test, you cannot tell them specifically what the chemical is and you cannot, for purposes of the test, tell them everything that they might experience because that is an individual thing."

"And, secondly, you are prejudicing the experiment by leading them into suggestive thoughts about it."

Sim said the volunteers "were all told that they were going to undergo a test with a chemical and they were told approximately the amount of time, the duration of the test, what the test procedure would consist of, whether they would get it by mouth or otherwise, and were told that it was a drug that might influence their behavior."

Sim said: "They all knew afterward." He was unclear on when and how the subjects learned they had taken LSD.

The research official, who said he has been in his present job for 19 years, said, "I would not give any individual a drug that I have not already previously experienced myself."

Sim said that seven of the 585 Army participants in the LSD tests have contacted the Army since the recent publicity and reported they had experienced problems.

The Army replied to the seven, Sim said, but "I've never had a second piece of paper from a single individual."

The Army said last week that it is embarking on a systematic program of contacting the 585 and re-evaluating their medical conditions.

According to Sim, Army authorities already had undertaken a limited follow-up with more than 50 former participants through questionnaires and psychiatric interviews.

"The results were negative," Sim said. Asked if there were any bad cases, he replied, "we had none," and said "nobody was hospitalized for any long period of time" after the tests.

Sim said that "absolutely none" of the work done under him at Edgewood Arsenal had any connection with the Central Intelligence Agency.

He disclaimed any knowledge of circumstances surrounding the death of Army scientist Frank Olson, who is reported to have committed suicide in 1953 after being given LSD in a CIA test operation.