

WIDER ROLE ASKED FOR RESEARCH UNIT

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3 Senators Back Bill to Put
Secret U.S. Behavioral
Work Under Scrutiny
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 9—A national commission that has already made an important impact on medical research policy in the United States would be transformed into a permanent body with far broader membership and responsibility by a bill introduced today by three Senators.

The purpose of the changes, Senator Edward M. Kennedy said, is to upgrade the importance and impact of the commission's work and also to bring secret government research, including research by the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency, under scrutiny. The Massachusetts Democrat is the bill's main sponsor. Cosponsors are Senators Jacob K. Javits, republican of New York, and Richard S. Schweiker, republican of Pennsylvania.

The panel is named the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. Congress established it last year to advise the Department of Health, Education and Welfare over a two-year period on the value, ethics and propriety of research involving humans.

The bill would establish a permanent Presidential commission to serve in the same advisory role concerning all federally funded research.

The present commission first met last December. Following recommendations the panel made in May, the H.E.W. Department lifted a ban on research on the living human fetus that had existed for almost a year.

The commission is now investigating psychosurgery and research involving prisoners and mentally retarded persons—subjects of considerable controversy.

Senator Kennedy said in a statement introducing the bill: "The revelations of the past months concerning biomedical and behavioral research abuses in the Department of Defense

and the C.I.A. underscore the urgent need to expand the national commission's jurisdiction and to expand it now."

In addition to establishing the commission as a permanent body, the bill would almost double its size by adding, as

members, the Secretaries of H.E.W. and Defense, the director of Central Intelligence and the administrator of the Veterans Administration, as well as four Representatives and four Senators.

The purpose in adding the Federal agency heads, Mr. Kennedy said, is "to provide a mechanism whereby top secret research can be reviewed by those members of the commission who have such clearance."

A Senate Health subcommittee, of which Mr. Kennedy is chairman, held hearings recently on secret drug experiments involving human subjects sponsored by the Defense Department and the C.I.A. He said it was known that research involving LSD had been carried out without the subjects' knowledge or consent and without proper medical supervision. He said at least one death and several suicide attempts resulted.

The present commission, appointed last fall by the H.E.W. Secretary consists of 11 members whose fields cover a broad range of subjects, including medical science, ethics, theology and law.

None of the members is a Government official. All of the commission meetings have been held in public, and all of its documents, including preliminary draft reports, have been made available to the press and to other interested individuals and groups.

The openness of the commission's operations in dealing with highly controversial matters has been its hallmark. Its mandate from Congress was to investigate issues that have troubled elements of the general public and have produced much angry debate—such questions as whether it is justifiable to give a drug to a fetus that was about to be aborted to study the behavior of that drug in the living body; and whether it is proper to destroy tissues in the human brain to alter human behavior.

It was also to study the question whether research can be done on children, on the poor, on prisoners or on the mentally incompetent without infringing on their basic civil rights.

The major issues before the commission are widely believed to be of major social importance and also vital to the gathering of scientific knowledge important to human health and well-being.

The commission has contracted for expert studies to gauge the extent and nature of research that has been done in fields that come within its purview as well as monographs on the ethical issues involved.

All of this has been done in public. In the view of many who have observed the commission in action, its deliberations

have been responsible and reasonable. There have been sharp differences of opinion among its members, but there has been a large degree of consensus among them on the recommendations made.