

Did JFK Suffer From Addison's Disease?

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CHICAGO — Failure to make full disclosure of President John F. Kennedy's autopsy findings in the Warren Commission report has been criticized in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

A Kansas City pathologist said the secrecy leaves a "strong presumption" that Kennedy suffered from Addison's disease, a one-fatal ailment now readily controlled by cortisone and other steroid drugs.

Dr. John Nichols of the University of Kansas Medical Center contended the "public is entitled to knowledge of the health of their

Chief Executive and candidates for the office of President."

Nichols noted the rumors, never publicly confirmed, that Kennedy suffered from the disease when he campaigned for the Presidency and when he held the Chief Executive's post.

Addison's disease affects the adrenal glands.

He emphasized in a telephone interview however, that Kennedy was under good control and that the disease should not have effected his decision-making capability or altered the nation's history.

With publication of the Warren Commission report in late 1964 several physicians

treating adrenal insufficiency were academically interested in the autopsy report, particularly on how the adrenal glands had fared under steroid treatment.

When nothing was said about the adrenal glands, Dr. John H. Talbott, editor of the *AMA Journal*, wrote to Rear Adm. E. C. Kenney, chief of the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, who referred the letter to Dr. George Burkley, White House physician.

There was no reply.

Later Dr. Loyal Davis, editor of the *Official Journal of the American College of Surgeons* wrote to Cmdr. J. J. Humes with copies to Cmdr. Thornton Boswell and Lt. Col. Pierre A. Finck, the three pathologists who

performed the autopsy at the U.S. Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, during the early morning hours following return of the President's body from Dallas.

No answer came from the three, but two months later a letter to Dr. Davis from Dr. Burkley said: "all pertinent facts concerning the late President Kennedy were supplied to the Warren Commission."

Nichols contended the disclosure of Kennedy's adrenal disease came in a report in November, 1955, in the Navy archives. His was one of three cases reported, none by name. Nichols said Kennedy was identified as a "man, 37 years of age" who had had Addison's disease for seven years.