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ORGI Geschickter Fund

'KNOCKOUT' DRUG HUNT BY C.I.A. IS DESCRIBED

Records Tell of Proposed Tests on
Hospitalized Persons in 6-Year
Project Costing \$531,960

By JO THOMAS

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—The Central Intelligence Agency sponsored a six-year search for a "knockout" drug during which scientists were supposed to analyze spinal and other vital fluids from comatose and delirious patients hospitalized with terminal cancer, liver failure, uremia and severe infections, newly declassified records show.

The project was designed to discover the biochemical mechanisms that cause delirium and to develop new drugs and techniques to produce "maximum levels of physical and emotional stress in human beings," the documents show.

To keep their pool of human subjects and to continue the project's "cover," the researchers were also supposed to evaluate other effects of the drugs they were developing, such as their anticancer or cardiovascular effects.

The C.I.A. records show that this drug project lasted from 1955 to 1961 and cost \$531,960. Funds went from the C.I.A. to the Washington-based Geschickter Fund for Medical Research Inc.

Data on Humans Incomplete

While the records clearly describe the research proposed for humans and for parallel animal studies, only the results of the animal studies are described in detail. References to the results of the proposed human studies are vague and generalized and do not show conclusively that they were actually performed.

The documents, which were heavily censored before being declassified, do not indicate where the delirious and comatose patients were hospitalized, how many subjects—if any—were used, and what, if anything, happened to them afterward.

The documents do show that the project was designed and financed to provide for two biochemists to analyze "bodily fluids in a toxic state," that "the chief interest in the toxic cerebral state centers in patients," and that \$43,000 was spent on this portion of the project in the 1957-58 fiscal year.

A research proposal drafted for February 1956 through February 1957 shows that the biochemists were supposed to analyze blood serum, cerebrospinal fluid, intraperitoneal fluid from the abdomen and pleural fluid from hospitalized patients in a variety of conditions—"many terminal"—that might cause toxic cerebral states.

Failure of Vital Organ

In these patients, some vital organ other than the brain would have failed, causing them to pass from mild mental disorientation into delirium and comas. Some would be suffering from liver or kidney failure; others, from advanced cancer or severe infection.

Under the proposal, one biochemist associated with the hospital's routine services would provide routine analysis. The other biochemist would try to isolate toxic constituents in the fluids.

"While the chief interest in the toxic cerebral state centers in patients," the proposal said, parallel experiments were planned for laboratory animals. Over the years, these included guinea pigs, rabbits and rats.

In January 1957 a C.I.A. memorandum noted that research in the field of "natural toxic psychoses" had been undertaken in the previous year and would continue in 1957. The researchers had also screened 100 new drugs and found three that, at that time, looked promising, including "a very potent new type of barbiturate and possible alcohol antidote."

Many Covert Projects

The knockout drug project was one of dozens of covert medical studies financed by the C.I.A. during a 25-year effort to learn how to control human behavior. This project occurred during MK-Ultra, the code name for the research at its most intense stage.

Many of the documents describing these experiments have been destroyed, but last month Adm. Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, announced that 5,000 pages of documents pertaining to these projects had been discovered in the agency's archives. Admiral Turner testified about these on Aug. 3 before a joint hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Health subcommittee.

Dr. Charles F. Geschickter, who headed the Geschickter Fund, which received funds for the knockout drug studies, could not be reached for comment. He is one of four men who have been subpoenaed to testify before the health subcommittee on Sept. 9.

Dr. Geschickter, a pathologist and former professor at Georgetown University, was well known for his work with anti-cancer drugs.