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Report/Article Title Memoranda regarding Workload and Staffing for the Agent Orange Projects Office, June 11, 1984, June 27, 1984, and August 7, 1984

Journal/Book Title

Year

Month/Day

Color

Number of Images 0

Description Notes

Date: AUG 07 1984

To: Director, Agent Orange Projects Office (10A7)

From: Director, Management Support Office (10A5)

Subj: Workload and Staffing Review
Research Program Staff (10A7B)
(your memo dated July 19, 1984)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is two-fold:

- o to inform you this office will conduct a workload and staffing review of the Research Program Staff in response to your request; and,
- o to transmit the project protocol. I expect to work closely with you in accomplishing this project; I believe the best results are likely if we maintain close communications.

2. You will be contacted in the near future concerning the project. In the meantime, if you have comments or questions, please contact Patty Buesing of my staff on extension 2178.


C. V. YARBROUGH

Attachment

AGENT ORANGE
AUG 08 1984
RECEIVED - (10A7)

PROPOSED PROJECT PROTOCOL

TITLE: Organizational Analysis - Workload and Staffing Review
Research Program Staff, Agent Orange Projects Office (10A7B)

OBJECTIVES:

1. To determine the nature and scope of the workload assigned to the Research Program Staff.
2. To identify staffing utilization and staffing requirements in relation to workload.
3. To recommend measures, including management improvements if appropriate, to facilitate the accomplishment of workload.

BACKGROUND:

The Agent Orange Projects Office was established November 1, 1982. The Research Program Staff is a section within the office. Since that time, the research staff has assumed responsibility for the:

- o mortality study of Vietnam veterans
- o soft tissue sarcoma study
- o review of the Agent Orange Registry and Patient Treatment File
- o review of health problems of Vietnam veterans treated in VA hospitals

In addition, three other research projects are in the process of being developed, and several more are being planned for the FY 1985 - 1988 timeframe.

The Director, Agent Orange Projects Office, has requested Management Support Office to conduct a review of staffing requirements in relation to established and anticipated workload.

METHODOLOGY:

1. Review of program-related documents and workload indicators, e.g.,
 - o functional statements
 - o organizational charts
 - o position descriptions
 - o reports, studies

2. In-person interviews with members of the Research Program Staff.
3. In-person or telephone interviews with Agency and outside officials who are associated with the Research Program Staff or who have knowledge of research methodology and requirements.

The scope of this contact will provide the study team with an indepth knowledge of the operation and scope of the responsibility of the Research Program Staff.

SCHEDULE:

<u>MILESTONE</u>	<u>TARGET COMPLETION DATE</u>
1. Project assigned	August 1, 1984
2. Protocol approved	August 10, 1984
3. Orientation to project completed	August 22, 1984
4. Data collection completed	September 7, 1984
5. Data analysis completed	September 21, 1984
6. Draft report completed	September 26, 1984
7. Report presented to Director, Agent Orange Projects Office	October 5, 1984

TEAM MEMBERSHIP:

Patty Buesing, Analyst-in-charge (10A52)
Ann Mirsch (10A52)

/ ✓ / APPROVE

/ / DISAPPROVE

/ / SEE ME



 C. V. YARBROUGH
 Director, Management
 Support Office (10A5)



Veterans
Administration

Memorandum

Date: JUL 19 1984
To: Director, Management Support (10A53)
From: Director, Agent Orange Projects Office (10A7B)
Subj: Request for evaluation of staffing needs - Research Section

1. On June 11, 1984, the attached memo was forwarded to the Personnel Management Committee (PMC) requesting approval for one FTE computer programmer (GS-9). Paragraph 2, page 4, also requested an evaluation of the overall staffing requirements of our Research Section by your office. The PMC disapproved my request for the position but did not respond to the secondary request.
2. Ms. Anne Mirsch of your staff recently suggested to Mr. Larry Stockmoe, the Research Section's Administrative Officer, that the staffing evaluation request be redirected to you for consideration.
3. Please feel free to contact Dr. Kang or Mr. Stockmoe on extension 5536, for any assistance necessary in the conduct of the staffing review. I would appreciate any efforts that can be made on your part to expedite the evaluation process.


BARCLAY M. SHEPARD, M.D.

Attachment



Veterans Administration

REFERENCE SLIP

TO (Name or title-Mail routing symbol)	INITIALS-DATE
1. Chief, Research Section (10A7B)	
2.	
3. RECEIVED	
4. JUL 5 - 1984	
5. RESEARCH SECTION, ACPD (10A7B)	

REASON FOR REFERENCE

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AS REQUESTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR YOUR FILES | <input type="checkbox"/> NOTE AND RETURN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS | <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION | <input type="checkbox"/> PER CONVERSATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONCURRENCE | <input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION | <input type="checkbox"/> SIGNATURE |

REMARKS

SUBJ: Request for One FTE Position, GS-334-9
Computer Programmer

1. Your request to recruit for the position of Computer Programmer, GS-334-9, has been disapproved by the Position Management Committee at its meeting of June 22, 1984.

2. The MAMOE Ceiling will have a number of major demands placed on it for FY'85 to accomplish new initiatives, staffing improvements and to accommodate probable budget reductions. Therefore, the PMC recommends that you coordinate the Vietnam Veterans Mortality Study and the VA/AFIP Soft Tissue Sarcoma Study with the Medical Information Resources Management Office (MIRMO).

cc: MIRMO

FROM


JOSEPH F. HEAVEY, Chairman
Position Management Committee
(10A52)

DATE

7/2/84

TEL. EXT.

5118



Veterans
Administration

Memorandum

Date: June 11, 1984
THRU: Director, Agent Orange
Projects Office (10A7)
To: *BWS*
Personnel Management Committee
(10A52)

From: Chief, Research Section, Agent
Orange Projects Office (10A7B)
Subj: Request for one FTE position,
GS-334-9 Computer Programmer

Responsibilities and Workload

As a relatively new section of Agent Orange Projects Office, the Research Section is undergoing "growing pains" not anticipated at its establishment. Since its creation and staffing about 1-1/2 years ago, the Research Section has assumed the responsibility of conducting the largest mortality study of Vietnam veterans in the U.S. from the Office of Reports and Statistics. The study involves reviewing military, demographic and medical records of 75,000 Vietnam era veterans and analyzing these data to determine whether Vietnam veterans have died from unusual diseases or in higher than expected proportion from a specific cause such as suicide or cancer. Because requisite information is not in the files for approximately 15% of the study subjects (9-10,000), extensive tracing efforts have been made by the Research Section's staff using both VA internal records (BIRLS, PTF, Insurance file) and records maintained by the Social Security Administration, National Center for Health Statistics, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Internal Revenue Service, and 50 states' vital statistics offices. Furthermore, the principal investigator of a study, "A Study of Ascertainment of Mortality in the U.S. Vietnam Veterans Population" has transferred from the Office of Reports and Statistics to another agency. The Research Section has assumed the responsibility of conducting the study as well since it is directly related to the mortality study.

Another large scale epidemiological study initiated by the Research Section and approved by the CMD and Administrator is a case-control study of soft tissue sarcoma. The study is conducted in collaboration with the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) under an interagency agreement. Under the agreement the AFIP provides general guidance in the area of pathology and the VA develops research protocol, selects cases and controls, conducts the study, and performs data analysis. The study has involved contacting pathologists from over 400 hospitals nationwide and requesting their participation in the study by assisting us in finding the control patients for each STS patient. At least three letters were sent to each of the 400 hospitals and the status of responses for each hospital as a result of the letter or follow-up phone call is kept up to date by the Research Section. The RFP was written by the Research Section and approved by the Administrator; the draft questionnaire was also designed by the section and approved by the Agency and sent to the OMB for its review.

As a parallel effort to shed more light on the health problems experienced by Vietnam veterans, the Research Section is reviewing the Agent Orange Registry and the Patient Treatment File. The Agent Orange medical examination records of 86,000 Vietnam veterans were reviewed and results were reported to the VA Advisory Committee on Health-Related Effects of Phenoxy Herbicides and presented at scientific meetings.

The monitoring of health status of Vietnam veterans who participated in Agent Orange registry examinations is expected to continue.

The Research Section also continues to review health problems of Vietnam veterans treated in the VA hospitals. Questions have been asked many times by Congress and others whether Vietnam veterans come to the VA hospitals with different or unique health problems as compared to their counterparts who did not serve in Vietnam. An initial review of a sample of 13,000 Vietnam era veterans (FY 69-82) and another review of a random sample of 1,000 veterans' (FY 83) military records and PTF medical data reveal no significant difference in the distribution of diagnoses between Vietnam veterans and non-Vietnam veterans treated in VA hospitals. These findings were also reported to the VA Advisory Committee on June 5, 1984. This effort of monitoring health problems of Vietnam veterans hospitalized in the VA medical facilities will continue by the Research Section.

In addition to the above on-going research efforts, three research projects are in various stages of development. The Readjustment Counselling Service (10B/RC) is very concerned with alleged high incidence of suicide among Vietnam veterans. The AOPO is actively cooperating with the Readjustment Counselling Service in designing an in-depth review of the cases listed as suicide or possible suicide in the mortality study being conducted by the Research Section. This will enable the VA to determine whether the frequency of suicide among Vietnam veterans is higher than among non-Vietnam veterans and also will help to develop a clinical profile of Vietnam veteran suicides, which may assist in preventing suicide in the years to come.

In collaboration with the VA Pathology Service (113) and the AFIP, the Research Section plans to conduct a pathological evaluation of malignant neoplasms among Vietnam era veterans treated in the VA medical facilities. There are several published reports which suggest that exposure to phenoxy herbicides may contribute to a higher risk of developing soft tissue sarcoma, lymphoma, nasal cancer, and possibly liver cancer. In general, it takes over a decade for cancer to manifest itself if it is caused by environmental chemicals. It has been more than a decade since the last U.S. troops were exposed to defoliants in Vietnam and about 20 years since the first massive spraying of Agent Orange there. Therefore, the time is about right for evaluating cancer problems in Vietnam veterans. About 5,000 cancer cases among Vietnam era veterans treated in the VA medical facilities in the last 3 years will be selected for this study. The AFIP will make a pathological diagnosis without knowing Vietnam service status of cases and the Army Agent Orange Task Force will determine military service status and Agent Orange exposure likelihood for each case without knowing the pathological diagnosis. The Research Section will coordinate this effort

and perform data analyses once all the information is collected. This study will serve as a built-in quality-control program for the VA Pathology Service by systematically comparing diagnosis made by the VA pathologist and that of the AFIP experts.

The VA has entered into an interagency agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct an adipose tissue analysis for dioxin. There is growing concern among Vietnam veterans that they were exposed to Agent Orange which was contaminated with dioxins and as a result dioxins were accumulated in their body, especially fatty tissue, and cause adverse health problems. Using EPA's historical adipose specimens collected nationwide since 1970, dioxin levels in the adipose tissue of Vietnam veterans and non-Vietnam veterans will be compared. The project has been presented to the White House Agent Orange Working Group, VA Advisory Committee, Congressional Committee and others. Its conduct will involve the Research Section in developing a study protocol and analyzing the data obtained.

There are several research projects in various planning stages for FY 85-88. We hope that the cumulative results of research studies conducted by the Research Section, the CDC epidemiologic study scheduled for completion in 1988, and other Agent Orange related research will provide a resolution of the key medical issues surrounding Agent Orange and Vietnam veterans by 1987.

Staffing

The Research Section is staffed with 6 FTE positions, 2 temporaries and 1 stay in school: Chief (Epidemiologist, GM-15), Senior Biostatistician (GM-15), Statistician (GS-12), Administrative Officer (GS-12), Secretary/Typing (GS-6), Program Clerk (Typing) (GS-5), Clerk* (GS-4, SIS), Statistician* (General) (GS-7, NTE 5/31/85), Clerk* (GS-4, NTE 1/26/85). *Non FTE positions.

As listed above, the section is now staffed with two full time FTE positions excluding Chief and one temporary position (GS-7, NTE 5/31/85) which can handle day to day research activities involving epidemiology, biostatistics or ADP. The temporary statistician (GS-7) has taken a position (GS-9) with the National Institute of Health effective as of June 25, 1984. This will leave the section with only two full-time professional research statisticians. I believe the time has come to reassess the staffing requirements for the section.

Under the current circumstances, I am afraid the Research Section cannot complete the research projects in a timely manner as we promised to the CMD, Administrator, Congress, veterans service organizations and the public. The lack of adequate staff support of these research efforts may unduly inhibit the completion of such research in both the scope and timeframe as originally mandated by the Chief Medical Director.

Recommendation

First, to meet our targeted completion dates for the Vietnam Veterans Mortality Study and the VA/AFIP Soft Tissue Sarcoma Study, I will need authorization for one FTE, GS-9/11, Computer programmer to assist in maintaining and updating data files and processing and analyzing the data collected for the studies. In addition, once the three planned research activities are initiated we will undoubtedly need additional help. I request your early decision on authorization of the one FTE position, GS-9/11.

Second, I also request evaluation of overall staffing requirements for the Research Section by the Management Support Service (10A5) at its earliest convenience.

An early decision from the Personnel Management Committee would be very much appreciated.


HAN K. KANG, Dr. P.H.



Veterans
Administration

Memorandum

Date JUN 29 1984

From: Chairman, Position Management
Committee (10A52)

To: 10, 10A, 101, 10A2, 10A4, 10A6, 10A7,
10B1B, 10B/ADP, 10B/EMS, 10B/RC, 10C,
11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 055B (D.P.)

Subj: Report of PMC Meeting
June 22, 1984

RECEIVED

JUL 6 1984

1. In accordance with CMD priorities, the actions taken by the PMC at its meeting of June 22, 1984, are listed below:

RESEARCH SECTION, APO (10A7B)

ACTIONS:

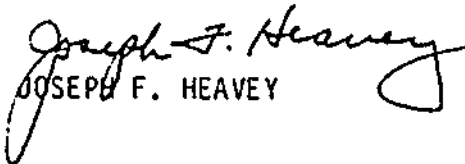
PMC NUM.	REQUESTING OFFICE	TITLE OF POSITION	TYPE POS.	SERIES GRADE	RECOMMENDATIONS
10A7B		COMPUTER PROGRAMMER	FTP	334-9	DISAPPROVED
10B/EMS		PROG CLK TYPING	FTP	303-5	DISAPPROVED
15B		CLERK TYPIST (NTE: 9/15/84)	TEMP	303-4	DISAPPROVED

DISCUSSION:

- 10A4A4 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT (APPT. EXPIRED 5/12/84) APPROVED 1-YEAR (NTE: 5/12/85)
- 10A7 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR APPROVAL FOR FTEE TO SUPPORT WRITER/EDITOR POSITION APPROVED 1-YEAR (NTE: 9/8/85)
- 10A7A - MEMO - REQUEST FOR SUMMER RECRUITMENT (NANCY PICCIRILLA) DISAPPROVED
- 10B/RC - MEMO - CONVERSION OF 700 HOUR APPOINTMENT APPROVED EXTENSION NTE 9/30/84
- 11B - MEMO - TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT (NANCY SMITH) APPROVED NTE 9/30/84
- 11D - MEMO - ADDITIONAL CEILING FOR CONTROLLED CORRESPONDENCE DISAPPROVED
- 117 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR REHABILITATION PLANNING SPECIALIST (GS-14) DEFERRED
- 118A - MEMO - INTERMITTENT APPOINTMENT - NURSE APPROVED
- 121 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR SUMMER EMPLOYEE (MS. PEGGY GRIFFITHS) APPROVED NTE 9/30/84
- 125 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT, NTE 700 HOURS (ELEANOR RICE) APPROVED NTE 9/30/84

- 125 - MEMO - REQUEST FOR PERMANENT ASSIGNMENT OF BETTY SIGG, GS-9, STAFF ASSISTANT TO CHAPLAIN SERVICE APPROVED
- 144 - MEMO - CLARIFYING INFORMATION & PLANNING LEVEL REQUEST FOR LIBRARY STAY-IN-SCHOOL PROGRAM APPROVED

2. Any questions may be directed to Management Support Office, X5118


JOSEPH F. HEAVEY

APPROVED/DISAPPROVED:


Deputy Chief Medical Director

6/29/84
(Date)