



MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

TELEPHONE (516) 345-1117

April 26, 1976

Congressman Ataji Baloo
Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Ataji,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The medical examinations of the Rongelap and Utirik people were successfully completed. We find it necessary to bring three new thyroid cases to the U.S. for further examinations and possible surgery; one in the Rongelap exposed group and two in the Utirik exposed group. There were no other findings of significance (except one case referred to below) and the peoples' health seemed generally good. The three cancer cases from Rongelap were brought to Tripler for examinations and we were glad that after special thyroid examinations there was no evidence of cancer remaining. However, a small growth was discovered in Ellen Deas in the region of the pituitary gland. Since she wanted to be with her daughter, Emrita for birth of her child, we could not carry out further examinations then but it is very important that she get specialized examinations in the U.S. and she has agreed to return-possibly with the three thyroid cases. I mention this to you to ask your help in case she should not fully appreciate the importance of further examinations. When we brought the three ladies to Tripler there was a regretful delay in getting them admitted to the hospital. It seems that a certain paper was not given to us for entrance into the U.S. and immigration held us up a long time and then in spite of careful preparations for admission to the hospital there was a delay in getting them admitted. I was most sorry for this and know the ladies were rightfully upset. I was glad we had Lieutenant Jacob and Aejon Tias from Rongelap on hand at the hospital to be with them a good bit of the time.

During our visits to Utirik and Rongelap it was apparent that there was considerable confusion about those eligible for benefits of Public Law 5-52. At Utirik the unexposed people thought that they should be entitled to I.D. Cards and at Rongelap they wanted all the children included. The law and the agreement between ERDA and T.T. states that only the people on our examination list (a copy of which is kept at Majuro) are entitled. This includes exposed Rongelap and Utirik people and the special unexposed Rongelap group of 150 people. Therefore, no unexposed Utirik, only some of the unexposed Rongelap and no children are included. We attempted to explain this and also that: the unexposed Rongelap control group was established many years ago (1957) and the people on this list were selected to match for age and sex people in the exposed Rongelap group. This group is considered quite adequate for both exposed groups and it has not been considered necessary to have unexposed Utirik people as controls. It should be mentioned, however, that all of these people have the benefit of general medical care at

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sick call when our doctors are on the islands. With regard to the control group it is my understanding that the Congress of Micronesia included this group for benefits as an inducement for and compensation for participation in the annual examinations.

Another misconception among the people was that the slight residual contamination on Rongelap was the cause of the few thyroid nodules noted in the unexposed Rongelap people (actually more nodules occurred in the unexposed Rongelap people not living on Rongelap). Attempts were made to explain that the radioiodines ("thyroid poison") that caused the thyroid nodules in the Rongelap people was gone (died out) by 2-3 weeks and so there was none of this "thyroid poison" left when the unexposed people moved there. The level of other radioisotopes which are not selectively absorbed by the thyroid (as is radioiodine) has been far too low to be of consequence in this regard.

It was a pleasure having John Haglaligan with us and I am sure he has a much better insight into these problems as a result. He indicated that you may visit the other islands soon. If so, I hope you will be able to help clarify some of the misunderstandings. I am afraid some of the people are blaming our medical team for the stipulations of the law and agreement. It was a pleasure seeing you in Koror.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Robert A. Conrad, M.D.

RAC:in

cc: Congressman J. Haglaligan

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