

Marshall Islanders Showing Thyroid

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WASHINGTON—A significant number of Marshall Islanders are only now—11 years later—beginning to show thyroid gland damage after being accidentally drenched with radioactive fallout from an American H-bomb test in the Pacific.

The finding of latent damage, according to the government doctor in charge of treating the islanders for thyroid damage, means that atomic experts now see an increased hazard

is the kind of fallout, such as radioactive iodine, that occurs mostly near an atomic blast and gets into the human body through food and drink.

Moreover, said Dr. Robert Conrad in a telephone interview, there is some evidence that fallout damage to the thyroid gland might also be the cause of an observed stunting among some of the children exposed to the fallout.

Conrad is the leader of a medical survey team that commutes between Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island and Rongelap Island in the Marshalls. The

Damage--Result of '54 H-Bomb

team's most recent report to the Atomic Energy Commission is being circulated this week to members of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy.

What these reports show is this:

Between March and October of this year, 10 new cases of thyroid abnormalities have been found among the 82 Rongelap natives who were exposed to fallout in the first week of March, 1954. This brings to 18, the total number of the 82 fallout-drenched natives who show thyroid damage.

Most of the damage is in the form of benign

tumors. But at least one has turned out to be a cancer of the thyroid gland.

Significantly, in a control group of Rongelap natives who escaped the 1954 fallout—including some near relatives of those not as lucky—there has been no evidence of thyroid disease.

Six of the thyroid victims have undergone successful operations. Three, with benign tumors, underwent surgery at the U.S. Naval Hospital on Guam in 1964. Three others, two with benign tumors and one with a cancerous thyroid gland, have had surgery at the Lahey Clinic in Boston. The rest are being treated at Brookhaven.

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