

NATIONAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

GENERAL REPORT
ATOMIC BOMB CASUALTY COMMISSION
JANUARY 1947

2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington, D. C.

FOREWORD

The report by Dr. Austin M. Brues and Dr. Paul S. Henshaw is one of the series of studies which have been made on the medical and biological effects of the atomic bombs dropped in Japan. The initial American investigations were made by a joint Army and Navy commission and the findings of this commission constitute the first American analysis of the casualties. Various Japanese investigations of the atomic effects had been made even before the American commission entered Japan. Many data are, therefore, contained in the various documents and the present report grew naturally out of the necessity for a continuing study of these medical and biological effects.

The National Research Council's connection with the problem came through a letter from the Surgeon General, U. S. Army, written in May 1946, to the Chairman of the Division of Medical Sciences. In this letter, General Kirk pointed out the desirability of a careful follow-up of the Japanese casualties and requested that the Council undertake a survey of the possible methods of achieving the desired results. As a result of General Kirk's letter, a conference was held in the National Research Council on 28 May 1946, with both civilians and representatives of the federal services in attendance. Out of the deliberations of this group grew a series of recommendations which were transmitted to General Kirk. It was pointed out that in order that too much time should not elapse, an interim mechanism should be established whereby competent civilians would be appointed as consultants to the Secretary of War and dispatched to Japan as soon as possible. Furthermore, the committee recommended that steps be taken looking to the establishment of a permanent organization for continuing long-term study of the biological and medical effects of the two bombs.

As a result of the recommendation suggesting interim action, General Kirk asked the Division of Medical Sciences of the Research Council to suggest a number of qualified civilians. General Kirk selected Dr. Austin M. Brues of the University of Chicago, and Dr. Paul S. Henshaw of the Clinton Laboratory of the Manhattan District, as civilian investigators. Both of these individuals had had extensive experience in study of the biological effects of atomic energy and were eminently qualified for the mission. Dr. Brues and

Dr. Henshaw were dispatched to Japan in the late fall, accompanied by two medical officers of the Army and one medical officer of the Navy. The findings of these medical scientists are given in the report and constitute a discriminating summary of the biological and medical effects on man of the huge radiation. It portrays also the attitude of the Japanese towards the whole problem. It is my feeling that Dr. Brues and Dr. Henshaw conducted a very successful expedition and made a contribution of great merit to the whole subject. Interest in the Commission's survey was not confined to the War and Navy Departments; civilian biologists and physicians were also intensely interested in the whole undertaking. The aspects of the radiation-effects which concern neoplastic disease, led the American Cancer Society to make a small but thoroughly useful contribution to the enterprise.

During the period when Dr. Brues and Dr. Henshaw were in Japan, the National Academy of Sciences - National Research Council received a Presidential Directive instructing the National Research Council to undertake a long-range, continuing study of the biological and medical effects of the atomic bomb on man. The Council was, under this Directive, authorized to enlist the aid of the governmental agencies and personnel and of such civilian agencies and personnel as may be needed.

To meet the stipulations of the Presidential Directive, the National Research Council is now proceeding to appoint a standing committee which will undertake the supervision of long-term continuing studies of the nature required by the problem. The activities of this committee will be carefully correlated with the responsibilities of the Atomic Energy Commission and will provide a mechanism for an enduring study of the medical and biological effects of the atomic radiation, especially on man. To the work of this newly established committee, the report of Dr. Brues and Dr. Henshaw makes an important contribution.

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GENERAL REPORT

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January 1947

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PREFACE

This report was prepared with one thought in mind -- the supplying of background information useful in setting up a long-term program for study of atomic bomb casualties.

Before embarking upon its investigation the present commission had the advantage of access to the Medical Report of the Joint Commission for the Investigation of the Effects of the Atomic Bomb in Japan. This detailed report, now being edited for early publication by the War Department, includes not only a clinical survey of survivors but also a careful analysis of the pathological lesions encountered. It was prepared under the general direction of Col. Ashley W. Oughterson, M.C., A.U.S., chairman of the Joint Commission, Col. Stafford L. Warren, M.C., A.U.S., representing the Manhattan Engineer District and Captain Shields Warren, (M C), U.S.N.R., representing the Navy.

The present report has been purposely over-weighted with Japanese material to indicate both the character and quantity of Japanese work. With the exception of the short discussion on burn scars, (Appendix 5, Part III), no technical information has been presented by the American group. On the other hand, a rather large amount of technical information on atomic injury to date is presented in the Japanese Medical Report, (Appendix 9, Part III.) It should be emphasized that Appendix 9 is a summary paper prepared exclusively by Japanese without American aid, and without access to classified information.