

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Public Health Service
Washington, D. C. 20201

FOR RELEASE IN A.M. PAPERS
Wednesday, March 16, 1966

HEW-574

Surgeon General William H. Stewart today made public results obtained thus far in a study of thyroid conditions among school students in portions of Utah and Arizona which is being conducted by the Public Health Service in cooperation with health authorities of the two States and the University of Utah Medical Center.

The study includes clinical examinations, thyroid function tests, and such data as family history of thyroid abnormalities, dietary habits, and exposure to medical and dental radiation, as well as possible exposure to fallout from atmospheric nuclear tests at the Nevada Test Site in the 1950's.

No malignant growths of the thyroid gland have been found in any of the Utah and Arizona students. Dr. Stewart said, however, that the study turned up a number of cases of thyroiditis, an inflammation of the thyroid which may produce nodules in the gland. He said thyroiditis had been specifically diagnosed in five children and, on the basis of thyroid function tests was strongly suspected in at least four other Utah cases and three in the Arizona group.

The significance of proven or suspected thyroiditis in the Utah and Arizona children is not clearly understood. He added that during recent years a general increase in thyroiditis has been noted in several widely separated areas in this country and abroad. To date, no relationship has been established between thyroiditis and exposure to radiation.

(More)

The Surgeon General said that the present findings were the result of clinical and laboratory studies recommended by three physicians specializing in thyroid disease who, at the request of PHS, examined 70 students in Washington County, Utah, and 25 students in Graham County, Arizona, previously identified by teams of PHS physicians as having possible thyroid gland nodules. The earlier examinations were made in September 1965, on 2000 Utah students and 1400 in the Arizona county. Reexamination by the team of experts took place in early November.

The specialists were Dr. Raymond Keating, Jr., head of the Clinical Section of Mayo Clinic; Dr. Brown M. Dobyns, of the Cleveland, Ohio, General Hospital, and Dr. Joseph E. Rall, of the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Stewart said the examination by this expert group last November confirmed for the most part the initial findings of thyroid nodularity, and led to the recommendation that the present studies be undertaken to determine the nature of the nodules. In May 1966, the three experts will restudy all children they originally examined in the two communities to evaluate further the status of thyroid abnormalities in the two groups.

Dr. Marvin L. Rallison, of the University of Utah Medical Center, supervised the clinical and laboratory studies recommended by the three thyroid experts. Assistance was given by the State Departments of Health of Utah and Arizona and by local physicians and health workers.

Note to Correspondents: This report is being released simultaneously in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Phoenix, Arizona, by the State Health Departments of those States.