

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center



University Hospitals
School of Medicine
School of Nursing
School of Dentistry

4200 East Ninth Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80262

January 13, 1982

Mr. Robert B. MacFarland

Dear Bob:

I seem to have been involved with many things over the holidays, including a trip to my son's home in Las Cruces, New Mexico for Christmas. Therefore, I did not get around to your letter until now.

I appreciate greatly receiving the reprint/clipping by John Tooley regarding the Rocky Mountain Arsenal employees and their suit against the University and against Dr. Gaan based primarily on the premise that they were not told about the risks of exposure to nerve gas while working at the facility. Whenever the government undertakes to make something as hazardous as nerve gas, obviously there will be exposures by workers during their employment. These really represent a hazard created by the Army and, therefore, logically they should be liable. However, since one cannot sue the government, hence there is the University, for example, since they had a contract with the Arsenal.

I understand from the Army--there is one study on animals that suggests long-term effects of nerve gas and organophosphorus insecticides but have not seen the article. Our own data never proved long-term effects though a single acute exposure might produce effects which persisted up to two years.

I am enclosing what reprints I have available on the subject. If you want some of our long-term studies which were never published, let me know. If you have additional questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph H. Holmes
Joseph H. Holmes, M.D.

JHH:mjwg
Enclosures

ROBERT B. McFARLAND, M.D.

Internal Medicine

2660 13th STREET

BOULDER, COLORADO 80302

Telephone 443-8585

March 3, 1982

Dr. Roy Shore
900 14th Street
Greeley, Colorado 80613

Dear Roy,

When the University was sued by five former Rocky Mountain Arsenal workers because they believed they had been permanently damaged by exposure to nerve gas the University settled the losses. In reading the depositions it was clear the University was taking the blame for the Army because the University had Army contracts to do research on and provide medical care for the Arsenal workers.

In order to determine if there really were harmful permanent effects on the workers we need to review their health status now. I am interested in following the workers examined by Drs. Joe Holmes and David Metcalf and reported in their paper EEG, Psychological and Neurological Alterations in Humans with Organophosphate Exposure, Annals N.Y. Academy of Science, Vol. 160, p. 357, 1969.

Dr. Holmes tells me he needs permission of the University Lawyer to review the material and make those names available. I believe the University is not really liable for any damage that might have occurred to these workers because they did this work on Army contracts. I hope you can talk to the University Lawyer because I think study of chronic effects of organophosphate poisoning needs to be done. With so many organic poisoning episodes among farm workers the need to answer the question of whether or not permanent injury can occur is moderately important.

I am enclosing a page of testimony by the Army doctor in charge of the Arsenal studies to show what I mean about the University taking a rap for the Army.

Sincerely,

Robert B. McFarland, M.D.

enclosure
REM/dc

ROBERT B. McFARLAND, M.D.

Internal Medicine

2660 13th STREET

BOULDER, COLORADO 80302

Telephone 443-8585

August 18, 1985

Dear Regent Bernick,

Your comment in this mornings paper that you would have problems if the University were doing nerve-gas research caught my eye. I'm sure you know that we used to do nerve-gas research since Bryan Morgan represented some of the injured workers in their lawsuit against the University.

I was working as a resident physician in 1959 at Colorado General when some of the Arsenal workers used to come in for treatment of the injuries they "inadvertantly" suffered at work. The antidote 2-PAM, was found to be very effective for people who were made sick from these gases. I didn't realize the work was classified until the lawsuit was filed and I tried to look up some of the men's charts at University Hospital. They were gone.

Eldon Savage of Colorado State University designed a very simple study to demonstrate if this type of work was hazardous as the employees claimed. He said to get a list of the workers (either from the Army, The University or their union) and see if their mortality over the past 25 years was higher than the national average for men of their comprable age, health and work status. I was never able to get such a list but I hope you can help me get that now that the subject of University involvement in classified war research has surfaced again.

I would like to assist you in whatever way you think is practical in uncovering this cover up.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob McFarland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO



Richard J. Bernick

2200 FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING
621 17TH STREET
DENVER, COLORADO 80293
TELEPHONE 303 534-3233

September 4, 1985

Robert B. McFarland, M.D.
2660 13th Street
Boulder, Colorado 80302

Dear Dr. McFarland:

Thank you for your letter of August 18, 1985.

The last session of the legislature enacted legislation making the University subject to the Open Record's law. This might make it possible for you to get lists of the persons treated at University Hospital for nerve gas injuries, unless the patient records fall under some exception to the Act.

I had not known about Bryan Morgan's suit and am curious as to when it was brought and what the outcome was.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Bernick
Richard J. Bernick

RJB/dc

Bryan
831-7364

ROBERT B. McFARLAND, M.D.

Internal Medicine

2660 13th STREET

BOULDER, COLORADO 80302

Telephone 443-8585

June 24, 1986

Bruce Gellerman Center for Investigative Reporting
1755 Mass Ave NW Suite 505
Wash DC 20036

Dear Bruce,

Here is what I have on the nerve gas damage to the workers who had heavy exposure to the stuff for years. The page I copied from the deposition of Dr. Gaon was the best evidence that they were planning to use the accidental exposure of the workers as an opportunity to test the antidote 2 PAM. The antidote is very effective and is used all over the country on agricultural workers who are sprayed by crop dusters. Joe Holmes was one of the nations experts on this in the 1960s. My letters to Regents Shore and Bernick are self explanatory. Shore never answered even though we were residents at the same time and he doesn't speak to me now because he is a right wing Republican. The letter to Dave Metcalf outlines a study I wanted to do to demonstrate that the Rocky Mountain Arsenal workers were damaged and had greater mortality because of their job. If I could get a list of the exposed workers and someone to do the detective work we could easily prove how they die off faster than their peers. The Army knows this but isn't talking. I thought Gary Mundt in Pat Schroeders office might help because he told me his father had memory loss from long years of agricultural pesticide exposure but nothing came of that.

While the Army was making Gll or the basic choline esterase inhibitors (organophosphorous compounds) that had been developed by the Nazis There was another plant closely allied where Shell Oil made pesticides using the same substances. Some people worked for Shell and some worked for the Army.

Bryan Morgan was the lawyer for the five that sued the University. At one time he was a law partner with Hal Haddon, Gary Hart's campaign manager in 1984. Bryan will probably tell you the whole story if you get him in the right mood but the terms of the settlement were that no one is supposed to talk. The depositions I read showed all the old workers were damaged but the doctors appointed to examine them didn't think so.

The Arsenal is now so contaminated that it has no use except as an expansion of the runway at Stapleton. The water in Adams county around the arsenal is so contaminated that the Army started buying bottled water for the neighborhood this spring. There has never been a better time to spring the story of the damage those workers suffered. It might stop us from making gas in Arkansas. Go to it.



ROBERT B. McFARLAND, M.D.

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January 26, 2000

To: EPA Osmudsman Martin
From: Robert B. McFarland MD
Subj: Organophosphorus poisons

In 1959 I worked as a resident physician in internal medicine at Colorado General Hospital. On several occasions I helped treat workers at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal who were poisoned by their work with nerve gas. We gave them a new antidote called 2PAM (pyridine 2-aldoxime) and most got well quickly. Four men were severely affected with respiratory depression and three required artificial ventilation, but none died. 2-PAM was a big improvement in the treatment of these poisons.

When the organophosphorus nerve gas was used in a terrorist subway attack in Tokyo in 1995 the Japanese doctors were still using atropine, the old treatment. Several people died. Medical information rarely moves this slowly and it may be that these poisonings occur so rarely that 35 year old treatments are still the norm.

The usefulness of 2-PAM is described in two articles by Dr. Joseph Holmes who was in charge of the study and these are included.

In 1979 four former employees at the arsenal and the widow of another employee filed suit against the Medical School, because they couldn't sue the Army. Their lawyer, Brian Morgan, told me he obtained a pitifully small financial settlement for these injured workers. Doctors told him that there was no evidence that small exposures to nerve gas caused permanent damage. The conventional wisdom was that you were either killed or you recovered completely. That is certainly not the case with most poisons. I asked Dr. Holmes about this and his first reaction was to say he had hated that study. "The Dean made me do it because we were so short of funding after World War II. Dr. Holmes and Dr. David Metcalf did a study of EEG changes in workers because they usually had mental confusion when poisoned. They all had EEG changes one year later.

The Shell Oil company was producing pesticides or insecticides at the Arsenal, composed of dilute solutions of the organophosphorus compounds. This was done because the compounds were so dangerous that only one facility in the country was used for their production. After the Arsenal closed, the process was moved to Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

In 1982 I met Dr. Eldon Savage of the Environmental Health Department of Colorado State University. He showed me a study that he'd supervised which indicated that farm workers who had been sprayed with pesticides had chronic illness. I said, "Where will this be published?" He said, "It won't be published because the EPA paid for it."

I've tried to get the study because soldiers in the Gulf War were exposed to nerve gas and that might explain the Gulf War Syndrome. When I asked using the Freedom of Information Act, the EPA sent me a different study. I had given up until now and I really appreciate this hearing. Dr. Eldon Savege's number in Ft. Collins is (970) 226-1120.

