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Subject: IHIRS CODING SUBCOMMITTEE

Dear Ed:

I agree with your thoughts on the initial scope of the committee. Following are my comments on your letter of 12/1/82.

Agent Identification Codes

The CAS number system is probably the only national, or consensus, coding system for chemicals. For that reason it probably would be the best coding system. However, I personally have found it cumbersome to work with in terms of length and consistency among the numbers for similar materials. Also, the numbers are variable in length from 5 to 7 or 8 digits plus hyphens. My computer people don't "like" variable length fields on the data sheets. I think some other choices warrant discussion.

Sample Method Codes

The proposed list appears fairly complete, and would be simple to add to when new techniques are developed.

Analytical Method Codes

This list also is simplistic and could easily be added to. An addition to be considered in this section would be space, or a scheme, for inputting the NIOSH or P&CAM method reference number.

From my experience and what I know of others, any attempt at occupational, or job codes is going to be difficult. I think in this area where we should collect and make people aware of specific industry schemes currently in use (i.e., API Occupational Code System), and general strategies to be used in terms of specificity of information and end uses of the data. What a hygienist needs, in terms of detail, is generally quite different from what an epidemiologist needs, but these needs can be combined in a logical manner.

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