

To:

Mr. J. L. Carvajal
Mr. D. L. Engle
Dr. D. H. Glenn
Mrs. D. C. Heyen
Dr. E. Q. Hull
Dr. H. M. D. Utidjian
Mr. J. W. Whittlesey ✓

Date: August 2, 1979

From: Ron Ritchie

Re: Brain Cancer

I was not aware and I do not believe after talking to Dave Glenn that he was aware that the University of Texas was embarking on an extensive study in Galveston County. Question I would raise is do we have some concerns about this? I would also ask if NIOSH let any of us know that they were "in bed" with the University of Texas to the degree that this article seems to imply.

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J. W. WHITTLESEY



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City news

Possibility of Galveston County problems to be probed

Brain cancer cases focus of local study

BY CARLOS BYARS
Chronicle Science Writer

Medical researchers are investigating the possibility that brain cancer cases uncovered at a Texas City chemical plant might indicate countywide cancer problems in Galveston County.

The local research follows the discovery by federal investigators of 16 cases of rare glioblastoma multiforme, a type of brain cancer, during a study of about 8,000 present and former employees of Union Carbide Co. in Texas City.

Conducting the Galveston County study are researchers from the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston and the university's medical branch in Galveston.

Dr. Patricia Buffler, an epidemiologist at the Houston school, explained: "If we have a localized problem, then it is incumbent on us to see if there is a countywide one, since these things don't stop at the fence line."

"We are pulling together all cases of brain cancer that have occurred over a 10-year interval. Then we will look at the age, sex and geographical distribution and com-

pare (the incidents of cancer) with rates elsewhere in the U.S. to see if we have an excess."

Others involved in the study are Dr. Ralph Frankowski and Dr. Robert Grossman, neurosurgeons at the Galveston branch.

Dr. Buffler said the local study "is complementary" to a study of employees being conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati.

In its study, the institute is seeking to determine the present status, or cause of death, of every employee of the Union Carbide plant since it went into operation in 1941.

Dr. Sanford Leffingwell of the institute said one additional case recently was identified, bringing the total to 16. One victim still is living.

He said the study has found, however, that two of the Union Carbide employees also had worked at the Monsanto Co. chemical plant in Texas City where other cases are being investigated.

The additional case lends weight to his feeling that the number of cases is more than should have occurred naturally, he said. However, the data has not been fully analyzed, he noted.

Leffingwell said the Union Carbide study was started on the assumption that the cancer cases were caused by something in the plant. Both the Union Carbide and Monsanto plants formerly made vinyl chloride, which has been linked to liver cancer. The chemical has not been linked to glioblastoma multiforme cancer.

However, Leffingwell said there is a wide variety of possible causes, including contaminated drinking water or a virus.