

"The only way to close the credibility gap is for the spokesmen for science to speak plainly, honestly, and bluntly—without minimizing mistakes, evading responsibility, rewriting history, or otherwise trying to cover up unpleasant facts. Language games in technical jargons have long been a favorite academic sport, but this is too dangerous a game to play when human lives and well-being are at stake."

Finally, the physicist or other scientist who is totally removed from the sphere of medicine and drugs should not ignore this area. Obviously the medical profession itself has been remiss in demanding the highest ethical and quality standards. Nowhere is the American public more exposed to the fruits of good scientific research than when it benefits from drugs which are useful in combatting disease. Likewise, the public is never more conscious of bad scientific research than when it is the victim of a therapeutic catastrophe. We must all face the unpleasant fact that adverse reactions to drugs are major public problems. Surely all scientists should do everything possible in their public roles to see that the quality of scientific research in drug testing is upgraded, and that the public interest is always first.

[From the New York Times, July 29, 1969]

PRISON DRUG AND PLASMA PROJECTS LEAVE FATAL TRAIL

(By Walter Rugaber)

WASHINGTON, July 28.—The Federal Government has watched without interference while many people sickened and some died in an extended series of drug tests and blood plasma projects.

The profits generated by these activities have gone to an enterprising contractor for the nation's biggest pharmaceutical manufacturers.

The immediate damage has been done in the penitentiary systems of three states. Hundreds of inmates in voluntary programs have been stricken with illness and serious disease. An undetermined number of the victims have died.

In a broader sense, countless millions of American consumers have been involved.

Potentially fatal new compounds have been tested on prisoners with little or no direct medical observation of the results.

Prisoners failed to swallow pills, failed to report serious reactions to those they did swallow, and failed to receive careful laboratory tests.

These studies have generated data that have in turn been used to justify the sale of drugs at prescription counters across the country.

This forbidding trail has been marked out by an Oklahoma-born physician named Austin R. Stough and corporations in which he owns a substantial interest. Despite his importance in two vital fields, he is practically unregulated in either.

As a general practitioner who reports no formal training or education in pharmacology, he is said to have conducted between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of the initial drug tests in the United States.

The 59-year-old doctor, whose companies have been blamed for the repeated use of dangerous methods and inadequate equipment, is estimated to have produced the plasma for about a fourth of an important byproduct that is widely used to protect people exposed to infectious diseases.

These prison-based enterprises have regularly incurred local disfavor. Dr. Stough was evicted from one prison by the Oklahoma authorities in 1964. He was forced out of an Arkansas prison by officials there in 1967. One of his corporations is now under orders to close down prison operations in Alabama.

But Dr. Stough (rhymes with How) is said to retain financial interests in some private blood banks in Birmingham and Dallas, and he is known to be seeking connections with prison systems in new areas.

He can do so freely. He has incurred no penalties, and dissatisfaction with his performance in one state has not prevented a repetition of it in another.

The Federal Government and the pharmaceutical industry—the two forces with enough broad power to compel safe practices from state to state—have maintained a general indifference at every turn.

Several agencies within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare have known the details of Dr. Stough's plasma collections and drug tests for years. They have not curtailed them.