

Health Alliance Seeks Extra \$1 Billion

By Victor Cohn

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A new health alliance will try to add a possible \$1 billion to the \$3.5 billion President Nixon has requested to battle disease and train doctors in the year that started this month.

The push is the biggest in several years for money to combat lead poisoning, venereal disease, alcoholism, mental illness and other sicknesses and to fund a major increase in health manpower.

The effort is separate from the struggle over national health insurance, which seems bogged down in a battle over costs that would make an extra \$1 billion seem a drop in the bucket.

Yet the administration, facing a mounting deficit, is opposing nearly every cent of this possible \$1 billion, despite the health forces' argument that research, development and training are vital to create the "health system" necessary to make health insurance work.

Alliance Leaders

Among those in the new health alliance are nine members of the House Appropriations Committee led by Reps. Sidney Yates (D-Ill.) and Silvio O. Conte (R-Mass.). They will seek a floor fight Tuesday to add \$230 million to the \$341 million the committee has already tacked on to the Nixon program.

Also involved are Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), whose Senate Health Appropriations Subcommittee starts markups today, and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. Paul Rogers (D-Fla.),

whose Senate and House health subcommittees have voted authorizing legislation to add \$185 million (Rogers' figure) or \$436 million (Kennedy's) for manpower training to the \$541 Mr. Nixon has proposed.

These sums are due to be argued in conference Tuesday or Wednesday.

Others in the group are philanthropist Mary Lasker and her Washington base, the National Committee Against Mental Illness; the country's medical colleges, and a new "Coalition for Health Funding," made up of the Lasker and college groups, the American Public Health Association, heart, dental and nurses' associations and 11 other groups.

Seeking to Piggyback

Mrs. Lasker, the American Cancer Society and Senate allies led by Kennedy have already pushed the administration into adding \$100 million for cancer research and proposing a new cancer authority. Now the broader health forces — though some are less than happy about so large a cancer crusade — hope to piggyback on it to win funds to battle other diseases.

They argue—as did a Friday statement by eight House Appropriations Committee Democrats — that even the committee's actions "do little more than restore cuts made by the administration below fiscal 1971 levels."

On lead poisoning of slum children, one of the nation's most neglected health problems, the eight said the committee was providing just \$5 million to fund a Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act and called the administra-

tion's \$2 million request "totally inadequate." The health group seeks \$5 million more.

On alcoholism, the committee voted \$25 million, compared with what the eight Democrats call the administration's "inexplicable" zero for state programs to be led by a new National Institute on Alcohol Abuse. The eight dissenters — nine with Republican Conte — would add \$15 million more.

Building Fund

The committee voted \$87.2 million for hospital building and modernization, mainly rebuilding crumbling structures; the administration asked no funds for such efforts. The nine want to add \$50 million more.

The group also would add sums for maternal and child care and control of infectious diseases.

Despite federally financed development of a German

measles vaccine, said the eight Democrats, "less than 50 percent of the target population" (young children) "has been vaccinated; in some states the figure is as low as 17 percent."

The group wants to add \$100 million to the committee's \$88.6 million increase to an administration \$1.4 billion for the National Institutes of Health, which finances most of the country's health research.

Low Budgets Scored

They argue: "It is primarily due to heart disease that America trails 17 other countries in male longevity," but "restrictive budgets have compelled the National Heart Institute to cut back on the number of its major research projects."

They also say: "More than 20 million people are affected by such diseases as stroke, mental retardation, cerebral

palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, deafness, epilepsy and congenital deformities," but "for some strange reason the President's budget has given the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Strokes the sharpest percentage cut of all the institutes."

The House nine do not really expect to win a House vote. But an impressive vote, they feel, would influence House conferees when they finally face Senate conferees — always more health minded — over final research and training funds.

One administration health official said last week: "I think we're going to see a lot of health money voted this year that the White House didn't plan on, at least \$500 million." "The President gave a bold-sounding health message, but the program will really belong to Congress."