

In re: Data relative to narcotic  
survey of Washington County, Maryland.

Cumming

September 27, 1923.

P.A. Surgeon R.B. Norment  
Washington County Health Demonstration  
12 E Washington Street  
Hagerstown, Maryland.

Sir:

Referring to your letter of July 25th and to previous correspondence relative to the proposed narcotic survey of Washington County, Maryland, you are authorized to nominate a clerk to assist you and Acting Assistant Surgeon Albert S. Gray in this work for a period of two months, at a salary of one hundred dollars per month. This clerk will be expected to perform the travel necessary in connection with the work without expense to the government.

There is inclosed for your information a copy of a letter from Surgeon Lawrence Kolb to Assistant Surgeon General A.M. Stimson showing the nature and extent of this proposed survey; also a copy of Regulations No. 35 and of the Narcotic Drugs, Import and Export, Act.

You will observe under article 24 of the Regulations that dealers who fill prescriptions are required to keep them in a separate file for a period of two years, and that under section 5 and article 134, these prescriptions are open to inspection by duly authorized officers, agents and employees of the Treasury Department. The clerk employed should therefore have a letter from you authorizing her to inspect the narcotic files of the various drug stores and hospitals registered to handle these drugs.

The survey should be started as soon as it is possible to make the necessary arrangements and should be made to cover the period from June 30, 1922 to June 30, 1923. From your letter it is expected that each doctor, dentist and veterinarian will cooperate to let you know how much opium and cocaine they had on hand at the beginning and at the end of this period.

If they do not cooperate examination of their records can be insisted upon. In addition to the information to be obtained in this way each one should be asked if during the stated period they suffered any loss of these drugs by theft or other means not in the regular course of practice, and, in the event of such loss, an effort should be made to ascertain the amount as nearly as possible. All such losses and any unusual diversion of narcotics into unauthorized channels that may come to your attention should be noted and explained in your report to the Bureau. The same information should be secured from hospitals, sanitariums, etc.

The information to be obtained from drug stores does not include the amount of opium on hand at the beginning and end of the year. The records these dealers keep and the reports they are required to make differ from those required from physicians and it is doubtful whether such information, even tho it could be obtained, would show the amount of drugs dispensed by them. Druggists may, if they so desire, register as wholesalers and sell drugs in unbroken packages. If this should be done large quantities might be sold outside of the county. There are several other sources of error to be feared from this method, but a tabulation of narcotic prescriptions filled by them should give accurate results.

If it is found that going over prescriptions to pick out narcotics requires more accuracy and more knowledge of drugs than the clerk could be expected to show, a copy of the body of each prescription should be made and forwarded to Washington where the necessary separation of narcotic items will then be made. Your report should be in such shape that results from each drug store can later on be separated if necessary.

Your survey should include in addition to opium, morphine, heroin, etcetera all preparations such as Dover's powder, Brown Mixture, laudanum and others which contain enough narcotics to bring them under the restrictions of the law.

Exempt preparations (Section 6 and articles 139-148) may be sold without prescriptions and by persons other than physicians and druggists. Such preparations contain very little narcotics and the report of the Bureau of Internal Revenue shows that the amount of narcotics put up in them in this country is insignificant in comparison with the total amount used. You should therefore make no attempt to find how much paregoric and patent medicines containing narcotics is sold by dealers other than druggists and physicians. Druggists and physicians are required to keep a record of such sales and in all cases these records should be asked for and the amount of such sales, for the period

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covered by the survey, included in your report. It is to be remembered physicians may write prescriptions that would be exempt and the narcotics in such prescription would not be included in the Bureau's report of narcotics in exempt preparations.

It is important to find in your survey of hospitals and sanitariums which ones, if any, treat drug addicts because such institutions ordinarily use much more opium than others- and also because it might be found desirable to communicate with them about some phase of the subject later on.

An effort will be made by the Bureau to furnish you with a list of persons registered to handle other than exempt preparations in Washington County during the period covered by the survey, but you should not wait for this list, and, in the course of the survey inquiry should be made as to sanitariums and drug stores which may have closed and physicians who may have died or moved out of the county since June 30, 1922.

You may write to Surgeon Lawrence Kolb at the Hygienic Laboratory, Washington, D.C., for any other information desired about this work- and the data collected should be sent directly to him, through the Director.

Respectfully,

HSC  
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Hugh S. Cummings  
Surgeon General