

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
SAINT LOUIS

DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
AND PUBLIC HEALTH
EUCLID AVENUE AND KINGSHIGHWAY

July 16, 1959

Dr. Leroy Burney
Surgeon General
Public Health Service
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Burney:

We are writing to inform you of a serious problem in public health in this area which derives from a program of the Public Health Service. We would appreciate your sympathetic interest and greatly desire your advice and assistance.

The Public Health Service at monthly intervals, determines and publicizes on a broad base the content of strontium 90 in milk of selected milk sheds in the United States. Uniformly, the St. Louis milk supply has been found to have a content of strontium 90 far exceeding that of other cities. In addition, the data available for the most recent month (April 1959) indicates that St. Louis has radioactivity higher than previously reported for any city and nearly twice as high as the city of next rank. These facts appear as front page news in local newspapers and have been widely publicized by other media. As a result there is public clamor and unrest of high degree. Parents and physicians alike are claiming that something must be done or that milk must be removed from the diets of children. It has been almost impossible to get the public or even physicians to understand that risks may be highly over-rated or that the data reported gives no information concerning radioactivity in foods other than milk. This is now a public health problem of greatest importance in this area. We believe that we must request your assistance and that of your associates. A statement deriving from your office, if properly framed, might do a great deal to allay existing fears. We believe that this is an immediate need.

To deal with the problem more completely and for the future, we also believe that the Public Health Service should afford additional means of gaining further information and of developing methods of control of exposure of certain population groups to the risks of radioactive contamination of foods. Your data indicates that such a program should center on the St. Louis area. We respectfully request your consideration of such a program.



Dr. Leroy Burney
July 16, 1959
Page 2

DEPARTMENT OF PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
AND PUBLIC HEALTH
3001 AVENUE AND KINGDOM SHWAY

July 16, 1959

We would like to offer the full cooperation of our offices in meeting these problems and will be most grateful for your early attention to our requests.

Dr. Leroy Burney
Sergeant General
Public Health Service
Washington, D. C.

Very respectfully,

Dear Dr. Burney:

We are writing to inform you of a serious problem in public health in this area which derives from a program of the Public Health Service. We would appreciate your sympathetic interest and greatly desire your advice and assistance.

The Public Health Service at monthly intervals determines and publicizes on a broad base the content of strontium 90 in milk of selected milk sheds in the United States. Uniformly, the St. Louis milk supply has been found to have a content of strontium 90 far exceeding that of other cities. In addition, the data available for the most recent month (April 1959) indicates that St. Louis has radioactivity higher than previously reported for any city and nearly twice as high as the city of next rank. These facts appear as front page news in local newspapers and have been widely publicized by other media. As a result there is public clamor and unrest of high degree. Parents and physicians alike are claiming that something must be done or that milk must be removed from the diets of children. It has been almost impossible to get the public or even physicians to understand that risks may be highly over-rated or that the data reported gives no information concerning radioactivity in foods other than milk. This is now a public health problem of greatest importance in this area. We believe that we must request your assistance and that of your associates. A statement deriving from your office, if properly framed, might do a great deal to allay existing fears. We believe that this is an immediate need.

To deal with the problem more completely and for the future, we also believe that the Public Health Service should afford additional means of gaining further information and of developing methods of control of exposure of certain population groups to the risks of radioactive contamination of foods. Your data indicates that such a program should center on the St. Louis area. We respectfully request your consideration of such a program.