

## Drug Abuse In Servicemen and Dependents

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**OBJECTIVE AND DESCRIPTION:** We have been initiating steps to develop a drug abuse research program in Thailand, and three segments of the population have been considered for study. Meetings have been held with the key personnel who would share the responsibility for such a study in their respective communities:

- (1) The Provost Marshal at JUSMAG, and the GI of SUPTHAI;
- (2) The Commanding Officer, and Chief of Psychiatry at the U.S. Army Hospital;
- (3) The School authorities at International School, Bangkok, where about 90% of the military school-age dependents attend classes.

All of these personnel are interested in cooperating with us in research efforts that might include a systematic survey of their particular segment of the population. With JUSMAG and SUPTHAI, we would be working mainly with law enforcement agencies such as CID; with the Army Hospital, we would be dealing mainly with the clinic population; and with the school population, the military dependents.

Any research that we do here would be complementary and supplementary to work being conducted by the Division of Neuropsychiatry at WRAIR. This research would contribute to understanding of the drug problems which occur in an overseas environment. Some of the questions which we will attempt to answer are (1) what drugs are being abused, and in what quantity, and by whom? (2) what are the psychological and sociological variables which correlate with or contribute to drug abuse? (3) what factors appear to correlate with lack of drug use (i.e., how do users and non-users of drugs differ?) (4) what suggestions can be made to others who would treat drug abusers? (5) what factors have contributed to the success or failure of drug treatment programs? The ultimate goal of all work in this area would be to develop a body of knowledge which will permit adequate command and medical response to drug usage, a response which will decrease ineffective performance and human suffering.

**COMMENT:** One of the major problems which has retarded progress in the development of this project is inadequate staffing. Due to the departure of a Medical Corps Officer without another officer assigned to replace him, we have been hesitant to embark on a long-term study of drug abuse. It is anticipated that the assignment of a research psychologist will be accomplished by the latter part of this fiscal year. This addition to the staff will enable us to initiate a long-term, multi-faceted program of research into drug abuse in Thailand. We have instead attempted to elicit the cooperation and participation of the personnel working closely with the populations under consideration, in order to develop several independent studies. The Department of Neuropsychiatry has been acting as coordinator and has provided consultation to projects developed, in exchange for access to and utilization of any data collected in such studies.

### PROGRESS:

(1) Starting 1 October 1970 arrangements were begun with the U.S. Diplomatic Mission Medical Unit and U.S. Army Hospital, Bangkok, to evaluate patients with drug usage difficulties. Patients referred to us from these sources are evaluated by the Spitzer Mental Status Examination to help determine factors relating to drug usage.

(2) Two technicians and three nurses have been trained in the administration and interpretation of the Spitzer Mental Status Examination.

(3) A library of books, journals, and reprints devoted to drug abuse research has been started in the Department of Neuropsychiatry as a source of reference materials.

(4) Additional files are being kept of (a) clippings from newspapers reflecting governmental policies and actions (including local, national, and international agencies) toward drug abuse; and (b) reports of research projects which have been planned or conducted by various agencies and which provide information on the prevalence of and the social and psychological variables related to drug usage and abuse.

(5) Consultation and cooperation has been sought with the Department of Pathology and Department of Biochemistry regarding urine and serum analyses for chemical determination of drug use among examinees.

(6) With the cooperation of psychologists at International School, Bangkok, a survey of the high school population was accomplished in March, 1971. This survey has attempted to determine the extent, pattern of, and reasons for drug abuse in this population. The data is currently being analyzed. Analysis will be completed in the next few months. Much effort and time was necessary to design and administer the questionnaire. A cooperative arrangement to provide consultation services to the school staff required additional professional time.

(7) Consultation with ISB students and active-duty soldiers to aid in understanding the psychiatric aspects of drug abuse has been accomplished throughout the period covered by this report.

(8) We have been consulting with the JUSMAG surgeon, the Air Force Psychologist at Korat, the psychiatric staff at the U.S. Army Hospital, and the physician and social work staff at Camp Samae San.

(9) We are currently making arrangements for computer support to aid in statistical analysis of data collected in future studies. Arrangements have been made for the utilization of key-punchers and verifiers at the Thailand School of Public Health. Other necessary equipment has been placed on order.

(10) Additional survey questionnaires are in the development phase. These will aid us in determining the extent of drug abuse in Thailand in both the American and Thai communities. Both urine and blood analysis will be utilized in any such surveys, which will aid in the assessment of the validity of examinees' responses.

**SUMMARY:** A formal drug research program has been initiated in Thailand. At this time, a survey of ISB (dependent) students has been completed to determine patterns of drug use. A great deal of time is currently being utilized making area contacts and developing the tools for a broad drug research program. It is anticipated that a wide range of areas will be investigated during the coming fiscal year.