

MILLION DOLLAR MEDICAL RESEARCH WORK

More than a million dollars has now been spent by the Agency on research contracts to aid work with radioisotopes in medicine. The object is to assist in making radioisotope techniques, as developed and elaborated in the technologically advanced countries, available to hospitals and medical research institutions in developing countries, where they can be applied to solve particular local or regional health problems.

Support of medical radioisotope work has always been given a significant place in the IAEA programme. The medical research contract programme really started in 1961, when available funds were large enough to permit some advance planning, though there had been expenditure in the two previous years. At the end of 1966 the total expenditure had reached \$1 090 033, the annual figures having been: 1959, \$46 270; 1960, \$73 220; 1961, \$124 515; 1962, \$145 028; 1963, \$166 855; 1964, \$130 940; 1965, \$222 010; 1966, \$181 195.

In 1962 certain criteria were established to govern the selection of applications for award. It was decided to give preference to projects which:

1. can only, or at least better, be carried out in the developing countries;
2. are concerned with diseases or disorders affecting a high proportion of the population of the country or region under consideration, and
3. could be expected to produce results having immediate practical applications.

In September 1962 the Agency's Medical Section sought the advice of a number of experts at a meeting at which the World Health Organization was represented by experts on nutrition, parasitology and entomology. As a result of their recommendations, highest priority has since then been attached to four groups of subjects — anaemia, endemic goitre, malnutrition and effects of parasitic infections on human subjects.

Up to 1963, a number of contracts were also awarded for studies of bone metabolism using radioactive calcium (^{47}Ca). The distribution of funds has been:

Subject group	No. of contracts	Expenditure in US\$
Bone metabolism	14	94 400
Anaemia	23	272 625
Endemic goitre	18	318 265
Malnutrition	16	220 510
Parasitology in man	11	175 550
Miscellaneous	2	8 683
Total	84	1 090 033

Geographically, there have been 13 contracts in Africa at a cost of \$131 285, 23 in Europe (\$237 420), 16 in Latin America (\$233 408), 15 in the Middle East (\$241 220) and 17 in SE Asia and the Far East (\$246 700).

Institutions in 44 member States participated in this programme. Contracts to the value of \$890 493, or 81.7 per cent of the total, went to institutions in developing countries, i.e. those entitled to support under the United Nations Development Programme (Technical Assistance).

Contracts are usually awarded in the first instance for one year, but are renewable for a further one or two years. They provide funds for the salaries of scientific and technical staff, and for equipment and supplies to enable a specified programme of research to be carried out. The money involved per contract is not large, the average having been \$6 840 for the first year and \$12 980 for the full contract period.

In present circumstances the selection criteria may well have to be observed even more strictly, though any application will be carefully considered.

It is difficult to assess the result of all this effort, though the number of publications in open scientific literature may give a guide. Up to mid-1965 the Agency had been informed of the appearance of about 150 such papers, a number which might be higher because contractors do not always give notification and there are often delays before manuscripts appear in print.