The Honorable Richard L. Roudebush
Administrator of Veterans Affairs

Dear Mr. Roudebush:

During our recent review of problems facing Federal agencies in recruiting and retaining physicians and dentists, we sent questionnaires concerning employee satisfaction and job intentions to Department of Medicine and Surgery (DM&S) physicians and dentists. We also sent questionnaires to former employees to determine why they left DM&S and to physicians and dentists who had declined offers of DM&S employment.

In a report to the Congress we summarized the results of responses to these questionnaires.1/ In transmitting the draft of that report to you, we stated that a more complete presentation of the results may be of interest to VA and that we would provide you with this information. The results presented are for those who answered a particular question and do not necessarily reflect the total number who responded; not all respondents answered each question, and, for certain questions, respondents could give more than one answer.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS EMPLOYED BY DM&S

We sent questionnaires concerning compensation, future job intentions, and other employee satisfaction matters to 185 physicians and 20 dentists who were employed by the 11 VA hospitals which we visited (see enc. I). These hospitals employed a total of 1,722 physicians and 119 dentists in January 1976.

Nonresidents' responses

A total of 79 physicians and dentists who had completed residency responded to the question regarding satisfaction with their present salary and 63, or about 80 percent, indicated they were satisfied. On the question about their intentions, 56, or about 68 percent, of the 82 physicians and dentists answering the question indicated they intended to remain with VA. On the question about whether they would have remained with VA without the special pay, 31 of 65 physicians and dentists, about 48 percent, indicated they would have remained; 22, about 34 percent, indicated they would have left; and the remainder were not certain.

The following list shows the number of respondents who answered each question and the percentage who were satisfied with various aspects of their work assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of work assignment</th>
<th>Number who responded</th>
<th>Percent satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal situation</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other opportunities</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of associates</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for career and/or personal</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities and support</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school and university affiliations</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative work</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of support personnel</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other aspects not included in list</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for research</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment system</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion potential</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for private practice</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown above, most nonresident physician and dentist respondents to our questionnaire were generally satisfied with the aspects of their present work assignments. Only the travel aspect had less than a 70-percent satisfaction rate.
Residents' responses

Forty resident physicians and dentists responded to our questionnaire concerning satisfaction with a VA medical career. The number of residents responding to any one question or part of a question varied between 19 and 39. The number of respondents answering questions about a VA medical career and the percentage who were satisfied with their career are summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of medical career</th>
<th>Number who responded</th>
<th>Percent satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school or university affiliations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other opportunities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion potential</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for research</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of associates</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities and support</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for private practice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications for support personnel</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative work</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment system</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown above, residents were satisfied with the majority of the aspects of a medical career in VA. However, satisfaction with four of the areas—physical facilities and support, opportunities for private practice, qualifications of support personnel, and travel—was between 50 and 55 percent. Less than 50 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the administrative and employment system aspects of a VA career.

RESULT OF SURVEY OF FORMER DM&S PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS

We sent questionnaires to 65 former DM&S physicians and dentists to identify their reasons for leaving DM&S and received
a total of 31 responses. Our questionnaire, which was sent to employees who left during fiscal year 1975, was designed to solicit multiple reasons for ending employment. It is not possible, therefore, to single out any particular factor as the most important. We believe that the decisions to leave DM&S were the result of a combination of several factors.

The reasons most frequently given for leaving DM&S were (1) job characteristics, (2) salary and benefits, (3) job locations, and (4) better opportunities elsewhere.

Job characteristics

About 62 percent of 29 respondents indicated that there were certain characteristics about the job assignment which were important considerations in their decisions to leave. Below is a list of factors which at least 20 percent of the respondents felt were important in their decision to leave DM&S:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for private practice did not exist</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little opportunity for personal or career development</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population too restrictive</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate physical facilities and support</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training not utilized</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much administrative work</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Salary and benefits

About 35 percent of 29 respondents indicated that salary and benefits were important factors in their decision to leave DM&S. Most respondents did not believe that salary alone was an important factor in their decision to leave, but other factors either had more importance or shared importance.

Job assignment location

Twenty-five percent of 28 respondents indicated that an undesirable or potentially undesirable location was an important factor in their decision to leave VA. However, most
respondents did not believe that assignment location was important.

Prospects for better opportunities elsewhere

Over two-thirds of 28 respondents indicated that the prospect of better opportunities elsewhere was important in their decision to leave. They felt that the following types of practice provided better opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo private practice</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group or partnership practice</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic medicine</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group practice, nonfederal hospitals, health maintenance organizations or group health insurance programs, and research organizations also elicited positive responses from 12 to 18 percent of the respondents.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS DECLINING A DM&S POSITION

VA stated that a large number of physicians and dentists had declined employment primarily because of inadequate salary. To determine other reasons for rejection of employment offers, we sent questionnaires to 75 physicians and dentists who had declined DM&S employment during fiscal year 1975. We received 32 responses.

Again, the questionnaire was designed to solicit multiple answers, this time to the question on reasons for declining employment. It is not possible, therefore, to identify a single reason as the most important; rather, a combination of factors appear to have influenced the decision to decline employment.

It should be noted that the reasons given for rejecting employment offers are based on perceptions of what working for DM&S would be like since the respondents had not worked for DM&S.

About 59 percent of the respondents listed job characteristics, such as a restricted patient population, little opportunity for career development, and too much administrative work, as influencing their decision to decline employment. About 40 percent indicated the geographic region where they would work was also a factor in their decision.
About 74 percent of the respondents indicated that the prospect of better opportunities elsewhere played an important role in their decision to decline DM&S employment. The opportunities most frequently cited and the types of practices providing those opportunities are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of opportunities</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunity for private practice</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better salary</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better utilization of training</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better qualified associate personnel</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunity for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More desirable patient population</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better medical school affiliation</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of practice</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic medicine</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfederal hospitals</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo private</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group or partnership</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

Physicians and dentists responding to our questionnaire who were employed by DM&S at the time of our review were generally satisfied with their compensation and most aspects of their assignment or career possibilities. This general satisfaction is further emphasized by the fact that almost 70 percent of the nonresident respondents plan on continuing their career in DM&S. The most frequent reasons given for leaving DM&S were job characteristics, salary and benefits, job assignment location, and better opportunities elsewhere.

Better opportunities elsewhere was also a major reason given for rejecting offers of DM&S employment. About 74 percent of these respondents believed that better opportunities existed outside DM&S, including better salary and utilization of training and an opportunity for private practice.

We are enclosing copies of our reports to the Secretaries of Defense and Health, Education, and Welfare (see encs. II and
B-133044

III) on the responses to questionnaires sent to physicians and dentists in these agencies.

We appreciate the assistance given us during our review.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Gregory J. Ahart
Director

Enclosures - 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA Central Office</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Dublin, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Birmingham, Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Boston, Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Togus, Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Denver, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Cheyenne, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Prescott, Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Los Angeles, California (Wadsworth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Fresno, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA Hospital</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Honorable
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

During our recent review of problems facing Federal agencies in recruiting and retaining physicians and dentists, we sent questionnaires concerning employee satisfaction and job intentions to military physicians and dentists. We also sent questionnaires to former uniformed physicians and dentists to determine why they left the service.

In a report to the Congress we summarized the responses to these questionnaires. In transmitting the draft of that report to you, we stated that a more complete presentation of the results may be of interest to DOD and that we would provide you with this information. The results presented are for those who answered a particular question and does not necessarily reflect the total number who responded; not all respondents answered each question, and, for certain questions, respondents could give more than one answer.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS EMPLOYED BY DOD

We sent questionnaires concerning compensation, satisfaction, and future job intentions to about 10 percent of the 2,534 physicians and 304 dentists who were in the military and were serving at the 13 locations we visited. (See enc. I.)

Nonresidents' responses

A total of 121 physicians and dentists who had completed residency responded to our questionnaire. Generally, they indicated that they were satisfied with their situation in terms of salaries and benefits. Of 119 responding to a

question on their present salary, about 12 percent were highly satisfied and about 59 percent expressed a degree of satisfaction. About 13 percent were highly satisfied with the benefits and 74 percent were satisfied to a lesser degree.

On the question regarding their plans, the results were less one-sided. Of 121 respondents, about 44 percent indicated they would leave the military, about 40 percent indicated they intended to stay, and the remainder were undecided.

Of the 70 respondents who answered whether they would have remained in DOD without extra pay—special, continuation, and variable incentive—about 81 percent indicated that they would not have stayed, 9 percent indicated they would have remained, and the rest were not certain.

The following list shows the number of respondents who answered each question and the percentage who were satisfied with aspects of their work assignment other than compensation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of work assignment</th>
<th>Number who responded</th>
<th>Percent satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification of associates</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal situation</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of support personnel</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative work</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion potential</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other opportunities</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities and support</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military system</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school and university affiliations</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for research</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for private practice</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One-third of these 18 work assignment factors were considered satisfactory by less than 75 percent of the respondents, and 2 of these factors were perceived as satisfactory by less than 65 percent. Therefore, most nonresident respondents appear to be generally satisfied with the various aspects of their work assignments.

Residents' responses

The following chart summarizes the responses of 90 physicians and dentists in residency who answered our questionnaire concerning satisfaction with the various aspects of a DOD medical career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of medical career</th>
<th>Number who responded</th>
<th>Percent satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotion potential</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal situation</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of associates</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical school and university affiliations</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for research</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other opportunities</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of support personnel</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities and support</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military system</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative work</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for private practice</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the residents who responded to our questionnaire seemed to be better satisfied with the various aspects of their work assignments.
aspects of a career in DOD than the nonresidents. The only aspect that the residents seemed to be greatly dissatisfied with was the lack of opportunity for private practice.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF FORMER DOD PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS

We sent questionnaires to 123 former DOD physicians to identify their reasons for leaving DOD and received a total of 81 responses. This questionnaire, which was sent to employees who left between June and November 1975, was designed to solicit multiple reasons for ending employment. It is not possible, therefore, to single out any particular factor as the most important. The responses indicated that the decision to leave was the result of a combination of several factors.

The reasons most frequently identified for leaving DOD were (1) job characteristics, (2) job locations, and (3) better opportunities elsewhere.

Job characteristics

About 86 percent of 81 respondents believed that certain characteristics about the job assignment were important considerations in their decision to leave. Below is a list of factors which at least 20 percent of the respondents indicated were important in their decisions to leave DOD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible military/civil service system</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory working relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little opportunity for personal or career development</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training not utilized</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate physical facilities and support</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population too restrictive</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much administrative work</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unqualified support personnel</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate medical school affiliations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unqualified associate personnel</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job assignment location

About 38 percent of the respondents stated that an undesirable or potentially undesirable location was an important factor in their decisions to leave DOD.

Better opportunities elsewhere

About 94 percent of the respondents believed that the prospect of better opportunities elsewhere played a significant role in their decision to leave DOD. The opportunities most frequently cited and types of practices providing those opportunities are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of better opportunities</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and/or career development</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or academic medicine</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working relationship with supervisor</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private practice</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of practice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small group or partnership</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic medicine</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo private</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfederal hospital</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

The responses from physicians and dentists employed by DOD at locations we visited indicate a high degree of satisfaction with their compensation as well as with most aspects of their possible career and work assignments. The only aspect that the respondents seemed to be less than satisfied with was the lack of opportunity for private practice.

Numerous reasons were cited for leaving DOD, including job characteristics, job locations, and better opportunities existing elsewhere.
We are enclosing copies of our reports to the Administrator of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (see encs. II and .III) on the responses to questionnaires sent to physicians and dentists in those agencies.

We appreciate the assistance given us during our review.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Signature]

Gregory J. Ahart
Director

Enclosures - 3
ENCLOSURE II

ENCLOSURE I

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

FACILITIES REVIEWED

Organization

- Headquarters
- Air Force Hospital
- Martin Army Hospital
- Cutler Army Hospital
- Naval Hospital
- Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center
- Air Force Academy Hospital
- Air Force Hospital
- Camp Pendleton Naval Research Medical Center
- Letterman Army Medical Center
- Oakland Naval Research Medical Center
- Walter Reed Army Medical Center
- National Naval Medical Center
- Malcolm Grow Air Force Medical Center

Location

- Washington, D.C.
- Robins Air Force Base, Georgia
- Fort Benning, Georgia
- Fort Devens, Massachusetts
- New London, Connecticut
- Denver, Colorado
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Luke Air Force Base, Arizona
- Oceanside, California
- San Francisco, California
- Oakland, California
- Washington, D.C.
- Bethesda, Maryland
- Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland
The Honorable
The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

Dear Mr. Secretary:

During our recent review of problems facing Federal agencies in recruiting and retaining physicians and dentists, we sent questionnaires concerning employee satisfaction and job intentions to Public Health Service (PHS) physicians and dentists. We also sent questionnaires to former employees to determine why they left PHS and to physicians and dentists who had declined offers of PHS employment.

In a report to the Congress we summarized the results of responses to these questionnaires. In transmitting the draft of that report to you, we stated that a more complete presentation of the results may be of interest to PHS and that we would provide you with this information. The results presented are for those who answered a particular question and do not necessarily reflect the total number who responded, not all respondents answered each question, and for certain questions, respondents could give more than one answer.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS EMPLOYED BY PHS

At the time of our review, 1,749 physicians and 216 dentists were employed at the 12 PHS locations we visited (see enc. I). We sent questionnaires to 188 physicians and 31 dentists at these locations. Since the pay, benefit, and compensation systems vary greatly between members  

ENCLOSURE III

B-133044

of the PHS commissioned corps and physicians and dentists employed under the general schedule (GS), we are presenting the responses separately for these two groups. Of the 166 respondents, 141 were members of the corps and 25 were GS employees.

Responses by corps physicians and dentists

About 79 percent of 139 corps respondents expressed satisfaction with their present salary and about 19 percent were highly satisfied with their present salary. About 88 percent of 137 respondents were satisfied with benefits provided.

Regarding their future plans, 46 percent of 139 respondents indicated they planned to continue their career with PHS, 34 percent did not, and the remaining 20 percent were undecided. Of the 106 respondents who answered the question on whether they would have stayed in PHS without the special pay, about 78 percent indicated they would not have stayed, 15 percent would have, and the other 7 percent were undecided.

The following shows the actual number of respondents who answered each question and the percentage who were satisfied with various aspects of their work assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of work assignment</th>
<th>Number who responded</th>
<th>Percent satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of associates</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work relationship with supervisor</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal situation</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of training</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient population</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for career and/or personal development</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for research</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications of support personnel</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion potential</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical facilities and support</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/civil service system</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other opportunities</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENCLOSURE III

B-133044

Aspect of work assignment | Number who responded | Percent satisfied
--------------------------|---------------------|------------------
Administrative work       | 122                 | 80               
Medical school and university affiliations | 99 | 56 |
Opportunities for private practice | 59 | 54 |
Other                      | 10                  | 50               

Responses by GS physicians and dentists

Of the 25 responding to our question on the degree of satisfaction with their present salary, about 64 percent were satisfied, although in contrast to corps officers, none were highly satisfied. About 76 percent of the GS physicians and dentists expressed satisfaction with the benefits received.

Twenty-three responded to the question regarding future job intentions and of these, 65 percent indicated that they planned to continue with PHS, 17 percent planned to leave, and the remaining 18 percent were undecided.

The following shows the number of respondents that answered each question and the percentage that were satisfied with various aspects of their work assignments.

Aspect of work assignment | Number who responded | Percent satisfied
--------------------------|---------------------|------------------
Patient population        | 15                  | 100              
Qualifications of associates | 25         | 100              
Public service            | 21                  | 95               
Work relationship with supervisor | 24        | 92               
Qualifications of support personnel | 24        | 87               
Administrative work       | 22                  | 86               
Personal situation        | 25                  | 84               
Utilization of training   | 23                  | 83               
Opportunities for research | 22         | 82               
Employment stability      | 24                  | 79               
Travel                    | 22                  | 77               
Other opportunities       | 18                  | 72               
Opportunities for career and/or personal development | 24 | 71 |
Medical school and university affiliations | 18 | 67 |
Physical facilities and support | 24 | 67 |
Promotion potential       | 23                  | 65               
Military/civil service system | 22         | 59               
Opportunities for private practice | 9          | 44               
Other                      | 3                   | 33               

3
RESULTS OF SURVEY OF FORMER PHS PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS

We sent questionnaires to 53 former physicians and dentists to identify their reasons for leaving PHS and received a total of 33 responses. Our questionnaire was designed to solicit multiple reasons for leaving PHS, and therefore, it is not possible to single out any particular reason as the most important. We believe that decisions to leave PHS were the result of a combination of several factors.

The reasons most frequently identified for leaving PHS were (1) job characteristics, (2) salary and benefits, (3) job assignment locations, and (4) better opportunities elsewhere.

**Job characteristics**

About 61 percent of the 33 former employees responding believed that certain characteristics of the job assignment played an important role in their decision to leave. Below is a list of factors which at least 20 percent of the respondents stated were important in their decision to leave PHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little opportunities for personal or career development</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory work relationship with supervisors</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military and civil service system too rigid</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor personal situation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate physical facilities and support</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Salary and benefits**

Twenty-five percent of 29 respondents indicated that salary and benefits were important factors in their decision to leave PHS. Most of these respondents did not believe that salary alone was an important factor in their decision to leave but that other factors either had more importance or shared importance.
Job assignment location

About 21 percent of 28 respondents indicated that an undesirable or potentially undesirable job location was an important factor in their decision to leave PHS.

Prospects for better opportunities elsewhere

About 85 percent of 28 respondents believed that the prospect of better opportunities elsewhere was important in their decision to leave. Those opportunities and types of practice providing those opportunities most frequently cited are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of opportunities</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunity for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better teaching or academic medicine opportunities</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better medical school or university affiliation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunity for private practice</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better utilization of training</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More desirable patient population</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of practice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic medicine</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonfederal hospitals</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solo private practice and practice with a health maintenance organization or a group health insurance program elicited positive responses from 18 percent of the respondents.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS DECLINING PHS EMPLOYMENT

To determine the reasons for rejection of employment offers, we sent a questionnaire to 276 physicians and dentists who, according to PHS officials, had declined PHS employment during fiscal years 1975 and early 1976.

Again the questionnaire was designed to solicit multiple answers, this time to the question on declining employment. It is not possible, therefore, to identify a single reason
as the most important; rather, a combination of factors appear to have influenced the decision to decline employment.

A total of 73 responses were received from physicians and dentists. It should be noted that the reasons given for rejection of employment offers are based on perceptions of what working for PHS would be like since the respondents never worked for PHS.

Characteristics of job assignment and organization were major contributing factors in rejecting employment offers according to about 52 percent of 69 physicians and dentists. Among those characteristics identified as more important were inadequate physical facilities and poor utilization of training. Also, about 52 percent of the respondents stated that job assignment was an important influence in their decision not to accept employment in PHS. However, only 28 percent of these respondents indicated that salary and benefits were important influences.

About 70 percent of the respondents declining employment indicated that the prospect of opportunities elsewhere was an important consideration in their decision to decline Federal service. The opportunities and types of practice offering those opportunities most frequently cited are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of opportunities</th>
<th>Percent of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better utilization of training</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better salary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More desirable patient population</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More private practice opportunities</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better opportunities for personal and/or career development</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of practice</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonfederal hospitals</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group or partnership</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic medicine</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSIONS

The majority of physicians and dentists employed by PHS were generally satisfied with their jobs. The GS
respondents indicated that they are generally less satisfied than corps respondents with respect to most aspects of their work assignment including compensation. Despite greater dissatisfaction, most GS respondents indicated that they planned to stay in PHS. Conversely, the corps respondents, while generally more satisfied with the compensation and other job assignment aspects, indicated less willingness to remain in PHS.

Job characteristics, salary and benefits, assignment locations, and a belief that better opportunities existed outside PHS were identified as the reasons for leaving PHS.

For those declining PHS employment, characteristics about job assignment and organization were cited as major contributing reasons for rejecting PHS employment offers.

We are enclosing copies of our reports to the Administrator of Veterans Affairs and to the Secretary of Defense (see encls. II and III) which discuss the responses to the questionnaires sent to physicians and dentists in those agencies.

We appreciate the assistance given us during our review.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Gregory J. Ahart
Director

Enclosures - 3
## PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

### FACILITIES REVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Rockville, Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Disease Control</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS regional headquarters</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS Hospital</td>
<td>Boston (Brighton) Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS regional headquarters</td>
<td>Boston, Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS regional headquarters</td>
<td>Denver, Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service</td>
<td>Billings, Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service</td>
<td>Aberdeen, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service</td>
<td>Phoenix, Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Health Service, Navajo Area</td>
<td>Window Rock, Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS Hospital</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS regional headquarters</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institutes of Health</td>
<td>Bethesda, Maryland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>