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U. S. GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE OFFICE
3086 FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104

AUG 1 1970

Dr. C. S. Stitt
Director
Indian Health Service
Portland Area Office
Room 205, Pittock Block
921 SW. Washington Street
Portland, Oregon 97205

Dear Dr. Stitt:

We have completed our review of the contract patient care program of Indian Health Service (IHS) which provides for care of Indian beneficiaries in private and community facilities when health services cannot be provided in hospitals operated by IHS. Our work was directed specifically to determining whether the Portland Area Office gave adequate consideration to the use of hospitals and medical services of other Federal agencies before contracting for medical care.

Our review of Portland Area Office records has shown that Indian beneficiaries have made substantial use of the Public Health Service Hospital in Seattle, Washington. Area Office records also showed, however, that infrequent use was being made of military and Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals. We noted that additional opportunities exist for Indian patients to use such Government operated hospitals as Whidbey Island Naval Hospital, Oak Harbor, Washington, and VA hospitals in Spokane and Vancouver, Washington. Area Office comments provided on these matters and actions taken as a result of our review are summarized in the following paragraphs.

We were advised that Department of the Navy's Bureau of Medicine has approved IHS' request for Indian patient use of the Whidbey Island Naval Hospital to the extent feasible. Patient referrals will begin sometime during July 1970 if the funding problem can be resolved.

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We were advised that considerable use will be made of the Spokane VA Hospital as a partial result of the expansion of the existing IES clinic near Spokane. We were advised that prior personnel problems between VA and IES, which had prevented earlier use of the VA Hospital, have been resolved. In addition, VA officials have advised the Portland Area Office that two VA Hospital beds have been set aside for Indian use as needed. We were also informed that present plans of IES are to use the Vancouver VA facility as the need occurs. This facility was not used in the past because of its nonavailability due to high occupancy factors.

Finally, we inquired into the use of the Seattle IES facility by students of the Chemura School located at Salem, Oregon. We were advised that the IES facility has one of the finest eye, nose, and throat departments in the area. Our review indicated that Indian patients were being treated at contract facilities even though health care costs could be reduced if patients requiring treatment such as corrective ear surgery were treated at the Seattle IES Hospital. However, we were informed that if scheduling problems could be resolved with IES, the Area Office would look into the matter of sending students to Seattle, especially those students capable of traveling.

I wish to thank you for the kind assistance and cooperation provided to our staff during this review. If you have any questions on the foregoing matters, please feel free to contact Mr. A. P. Simon of my staff at 206-583-5356.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM H. CONRARDY

William H. Conrardy
Regional Manager

cc: Director, CD
Assistant Director, CD - F. K. Rabel
Chief, Publication Br., Office Admin. Services