



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

CIVIL DIVISION

092114

JAN 29 1970



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Dear Dr. Marston:

The General Accounting Office has been making a survey of certain administrative activities, including supply management functions, of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases (NIAMD). During the course of this work, we noted that NIAMD had found it more economical to use certain types of disposable glassware rather than using the comparable types of reusable glassware because disposable glassware does not require the centralized washing services provided by the Division of Research Services (DRS). Information we obtained showed that at least two other Institutes have not taken advantage of similar economies which could be realized by them.

NIAMD's Administrative Officer for intramural research told us that NIAMD had found that, for certain types of glassware, the purchase price of a disposable item was less than the price charged by the Glassware Unit of DRS to wash a similar reusable item. The prices charged by DRS include a factor to prorate the purchase cost of a reusable item over its estimated life. The Administrative Officer said that laboratory personnel of NIAMD were furnished a list of such items and were requested to use the lower priced disposable glassware wherever practical. He explained that the use of disposable glassware has been found to be satisfactory and no complaints have been received from investigators about the quality of the disposable items.

We reviewed the catalogs of a number of manufacturers of disposable glassware and the applicable Federal Supply Schedule to ascertain the average purchase prices for the 13 types of glassware processed by the Glassware Unit of DRS during calendar year 1969. We found that for five types of glassware (pipettes, petri dishes, culture tubes, screw cap tubes, and beakers) the unit purchase prices of disposable items were less than the unit service prices charged by the Glassware Unit of DRS. Applying these unit costs to a projected annual volume of the five types of glassware used by all components of NIH, we estimate that the total savings which could be realized by switching to disposable glassware could amount to about \$90,000 per year.

In view of the savings which might result from a greater use of disposable glassware by NIH, we suggest that all component organizations

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of NIH which are engaged in laboratory work adopt the use of disposable glassware to the maximum extent practical.

We would appreciate being informed of any actions to be taken on this matter.

Copies of this report are being sent to the Assistant Secretary, Comptroller, and the Director of the Audit Agency, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Sincerely yours,

Frederick K. Rabel
Assistant Director

Dr. Robert Q. Marston
Director, National Institutes of Health
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare