

### Activity 3. Medical testing using prison inmates\*

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Prisoners Traditionally Offer As Human

## Many Viruses and Vaccines Tested on Inmates

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New York Times News Service  
NEW YORK — The front page story in the New York Times

recently of the alleged exploitation of prisoners for commercial medical research is shocking. Doubtless because of this ex-

pose steps will be taken to provide federal and state control to correct such abuses. Already, Sen. Gaylord Nelson,

D-Wis., has announced he will introduce legislation making the federal government responsible for more stringent control over

drug experimentation.

### Story Is Exception

This story is an exception to the usual high standards applied in the use of prison inmates in medical research.

The widespread use of prison populations for scientific research began at the height of World War II when many of our troops in the Pacific areas were being infected with malaria.

In 1944, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the U.S. Public Health Service began a malaria test program in the federal prison in Atlanta.

A few months later the U. S. Army surgeon general's office established a similar program at the Illinois State Penitentiary.

Since the inception of these two programs, thousands of prisoners have volunteered to participate in experiments in which they are bitten by malaria-infected anophelis mosquitoes and become "human test tubes" for measuring the efficacy of new therapeutic agents.

In the Atlanta project the prisoners participated for about six months. Their real satisfaction was five days off their sentence and \$50.

In the case of emergencies prisoners often respond.

Some years ago a 9-year-old girl in Ohio was burned so severely that 640 square inches of skin was needed as a life-saving measure. More than 1,000 in-

mates of the Ohio Penitentiary volunteered to give skin.

The live polio virus developed by Dr. Albert Sabin was tested on volunteer inmates in a reformatory in Chillicothe, Ohio.

Federal prisoners at Tallahassee volunteered to swallow measured amounts of DDT to determine its effect upon the human system.

These are not isolated instances. It is traditional in prison that when a call is made for "human guinea pigs" for vital scientific experiments there are always more volunteers than can be used.

Prisoners are particularly eager to volunteer for programs involving national defense.

Since World War II the number of blood donors in prisons regularly exceeds per capita volunteers in the general population.

Prisoners provide excellent sources for many types of medical research requiring prolonged observation. Closer observation and better control is possible than in a general population. The fact that inmate populations come from backgrounds of varied local environments is an important factor in many studies.

Appointments for examinations and rechecks are always kept. Diet is standard and no medication is available except that dispensed by the hospital pharmacy on prescription.

Inmates in Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, N. Y., one of the

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best known and best operated prisons in the country, have volunteered for many significant studies.

One was that conducted some years ago with the New York State Department of Health on the treatment of syphilis.

Sing Sing has had a number of distinguished partners in other research undertakings.

### Influenza Vaccine

Among the earlier tests the influenza vaccine was conducted at Sing Sing by the Rockefeller Institute.

The prison inmates also supplied healthy, normal muscle tissue to New York University and other research groups on studies ranging from chemical analysis in connection with research on arthritis and the value of antihistamines in the treatment of the common cold.

Contrary to the widespread belief that inmates are released from prison "broken in both health and spirit," men leaving

more modern correctional institutions are usually in much better physical condition upon discharge than on admission.

This is attributed to regularity of habits, good medical care, adequate diet, the slower pace of prison life, the absence of alcohol and the withdrawal of drugs from those addicted.

After the Nuremberg trials dealing with medical experiments by Nazi physicians in concentration camps, a Nuremberg code was developed covering medical experimentation on prisoners.

The code calls for "free power of choice" and holds that a subject "should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision."

This is done in modern, well run prisons, but obviously was not done in the prisons covered by the recent report.

## New Arrivals! Unbeatable

\*For better viewing on this news item go to the original source at:

[Nashua Telegraph, August 20, 1969, p. 36](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2209&dat=19690820&id=LlpjAAAAIBAJ&sjid=EnoNAAAAIBAJ&pg=6892,6122424), Courtesy Google News  
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