

Congressional Hearings

Anthrax Vaccination Immunization Program

House Government Reform and

Oversight Committee

Chairman Shays Presiding

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Written Statement by:

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I would like to thank Congress for expressing an interest to the Anthrax Vaccination Immunization Program (AVIP), and allowing me the opportunity to speak about my experiences of adverse reactions to the Anthrax vaccination, and problems seeking medical care I have incurred as a civilian. My name is Randi Martin, and I am a civil service technician at the 110th Fighter Wing Air National Guard Base located in Battle Creek, MI. I received my first Anthrax injection on September 18, 1998 for a volunteer overseas deployment which was scheduled to deploy on November 11, 1998. The second injection was administered on October 2nd, and the third on October 16th. According to my shot record, all injections were from lot FAV030.

During this time frame, our base was preparing for an Operational Readiness Inspection, which was scheduled for October 17-23, 1998. I felt tired, sluggish and slow during this time frame, but, associated it to the numerous hours of overtime, and stress that comes with any inspection with the military. On October 18th, two days after the 3rd injection, during one of our condition "blacks" (full MOPP gear), I was under the mask for about ten minutes. I started to feel light headed and dizzy as I was sitting on a stool, and dropped to my knees. One of my supervisors, MSGT Tom Starkweather, took off my mask so I could get air. One of the inspectors saw the situation, and took me outside for fresh air. He wanted me to stay outside for ten minutes. I didn't know what was the matter, as I have never had to take off my mask during any exercises because I couldn't breathe, or for any other reason. I felt like I was just being a wimp, so joining the rest of the group in the exercise was my first and foremost concern. I joined the group earlier than advised, and just kept telling myself to "suck it up, and drive on". I feel this was a very important point to make, considering that I have never had a problem with any MOPP exercises, and this particular problem actually made me have to take off my gas mask.

On March 14th, 1999, I received my fourth injection. The lot number I received is yet to be determined. My official shot record states that I received lot FAV0306. (See attachment A) When I questioned our clinic and my commander, Maj Dvorak, I was informed that there was an administrative error, and that I actually received lot FAV036. The next couple of days after my injection, I felt sluggish, tired and a little disorientated, however considered that to be normal.

On March 17th, I realized this was no longer normal. I was so tired I could not get out of bed. My days for the next week consisted of numerous hours of sleeping. I was awakened only to eat. The following two weeks, I attempted going to work a couple of times, but lasted only for a couple of hours each day, and then had to leave. The reasons were I was too tired, my head felt like it was going to explode, my abdominal cramping had me doubled over, or I was just too disorientated. I began to notice that my memory seemed to be getting worse, as I could not remember passwords to programs that I use everyday at my work.

On March 31st, I went to the emergency room with the complaints of abdominal cramping; my body was running hot and cold in temperature, a severe headache, shortness of breath and feeling nauseated. I told the doctor I felt it was a reaction to the Anthrax vaccination. The doctor inquired why I was not at a military hospital, as they did not know anything about the anthrax vaccination. I informed him of our situation at our base which is that we have no full time medical physician available. In his willingness to help, he looked through their immunization pamphlets, but could find nothing on the anthrax vaccination. This is the second time on the civilian side I have run into this situation. He called counterparts, and they did not know anything about the immunization. He called Poison Control Center who did not know what to do, however gave him the number to the CDC. He then called CDC only to get the answering machine. He left a message, and told me to go home and he would call me when he had an answer. I left the emergency room with no answers, but had a prescription for Motrin. While waiting for a call from the hospital at home, I was having a conversation with my father. I could not complete sentences without having to stop and gasp for air. I was so winded, I literally felt as though I was going to pass out. The hospital called me in about an hour with a number the CDC told them to give to me. I called the number but did not catch where I called. I was talking to a woman by the name of Kathy who seemed very nice, and wanted to know what my symptoms were. When I started stating them, she interrupted me to say that some of the reactions had not previously been reported as adverse reactions from the vaccine, so she was not going to report some of my symptoms as being any type of adverse reaction. Her response was I must have caught a virus, because symptoms associated with the Anthrax vaccine lasts 2-3 days, not 2 weeks. I told Kathy of my situation that doctors were not aware of the Anthrax vaccination, and did not know what to do for me. Kathy's response was, "They haven't heard of the Anthrax Vaccine? You must live in a small town? Don't they watch T.V.?" I asked where I called, and she told me the Department of Defense. It then became clear to me how the Department of Defense can claim there are few adverse reactions associated with the vaccine. How can you begin a trend of adverse reactions, when the Department of Defense states they will not report them? I received a call from TSGT Dave Churchill on March 31st. Our vice wing commander, Col. Seidel, just heard word of our situation. He wanted a report on what happened from the time of injection up to now, (March 31st), of events that took place with our chain of command and medical facility. (See attachment B)

On April 2nd, Col. Seidel called a meeting with the individuals from the group who received the fourth injection. I was off sick that day, but came in for the meeting. It was discussed during this meeting that actions were taking place to get us down to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, located in Ohio, the closest military hospital. There seemed to be a lot of legality issues considering we were civilians and this was a military issue. Col. Seidel stated that the soonest we were able to get to Wright Patterson to see a military allergist, was April 23rd. However, he was trying to get us in sooner, as he found this date to be unacceptable.

On April 7th, the first group of four left Battle Creek Air National Guard Base at 7:45 a.m. to Wright Patterson to see the military allergist. We were to take either sick or annual leave and be placed on a military non-pay status for our trip. During my examination, the allergist examined my ears, eyes, nose and throat, felt my abdomen, checked my reflexes and examined my VAERS report. I received a chest X-ray at my request. I was told I was fine. During this time, the allergist was made aware of my symptoms. (See attachment B) As the allergist from Wright Patterson was looking through my medical record, he noticed I was in a car accident in 1994, had a concussion and experienced a headache as a result. His interpretation of my continuous headaches was associated back from four years ago. When I was twelve, I stood up to fast, and experienced a dizzy spell, which per his interpretation, explains why thirteen years later I am having balance problems. The allergist stated in my medical record that I had a local reaction, and to follow up with my civilian doctor. Subsequently, two civilian physicians that I have seen so far know nothing about the vaccination.

We returned to our base as 11:30 p.m., still with many questions and no answers. I came into work the following day at 9:00 a.m. for a couple of hours and then had to leave early, still sick.

April 14th in the morning, I was feeling very ill. I had abdominal cramping, a headache and was feeling extremely nauseous. I went in at 8:00 a.m. to inform Maj Dvorak, that I was leaving ill. Her response was that I needed to watch my sick leave as I was in the hole. My sick leave available balance seemed to be the only concern, even though I previously made her aware of problems I was experiencing from the vaccination. (See attachment C) I finished the week of work with help from motrin, ibuprofen and vivarin.

My position at work requires you to be multitasked orientated. Since coming back to work, I am unable to accomplish this. I can now only do one task at a time, as it takes every bit of concentration to focus on just the task at hand. One month after the injection, I am still having continuous headaches which medication no longer has any effect on. I am still having abdominal cramping. I am still feeling nauseous. I am experiencing memory problems. I am continuously tired. I cannot walk up a flight of stairs without becoming winded. My joints are achy when they're bent for longer than a couple of minutes. I have extreme lower back pains, and just recently developed back spasms. I do a lot of typing at my job. Normally, I can type 75 words per minute. If I type more than five minutes, I find myself needing to stop, as all my of my fingers seem to tighten. I am only 25, and this should not be happening.

I was off work for nearly a month with the only explanation being I have caught a mysterious virus that no one can explain, or yet detect. There previously had been no follow up by our clinic with any of the personnel receiving this anthrax injection during the first three injections. After the complaints started after the fourth injection, most individuals were given an appointment to see our medical liaison. Our base does not have a full time physician, so, we had to wait until drill weekend which was scheduled April 10-11 to see them. I however, never received an appointment for this nature. I was on antibiotics at the time I received my fourth injection, and was never asked if I was on any type of medication or antibiotics. A VAERS form was never shown to us or offered. I found my own VAERS form on the Internet and filled it out myself and sent it forward. I never even knew a VAERS form existed, and I've been in the military eight years. I've recently learned that our base was never aware of a VAERS form due to the fact that it is not a military form.

The lack of knowledge and concern for a mandated program that has been displayed by the "key personnel" has been completely appalling. (See attachment D) The medical treatment that was given down at Wright Patterson to myself was nothing short of get her in, and get her out. The Department of Defense's response of not reporting some of my reactions I find very troubling. Due to the fact that Kathy at the Department of Defense interrupted me, I never even finished stating all of my symptoms.

I have found the situation I am in puzzling that consideration on what to do if a Technician or Guardsman becomes sick was never taken. This seems like an important step missing considering it is now mandatory for military personnel, active duty or civilian.

There seems to be no answers to my questions on why I am feeling the way I am feeling. The only responses are the vaccine is safe, it has been routinely used for thirty years, and will protect me in bio warfare. My concerns from this vaccination are legitimate concerns.

1. How come there have been no studies to find out if this vaccination causes cancer, has any long-term health effects, or causes infertility? Shouldn't thirty years be a long enough time to answer these questions?

2. If reactions get worse after each injection, with what I've experienced on the 4th injection, what am I going to experience on the fifth injection? The sixth? Annual boosters?

3. Why are my symptoms being categorized as local, which consists only of swelling from the elbow to the shoulder, and a sore arm, when there is clearly more reactions involved? How many other soldier's reactions are being classified lower than what they really are?

There are too many unanswered questions associated with this program, and there are too many vague responses.

The research I have done in this past month makes me wish I had done so beforehand. I am neither a medical physician, nor a scientist; however, I feel I am the most qualified to know what my body is experiencing. I know what my health is now as opposed to where it was before I started taking the Anthrax injections. There is a mass difference, and there is something wrong. The bottom line is that the way I am feeling now is at the hands of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program.