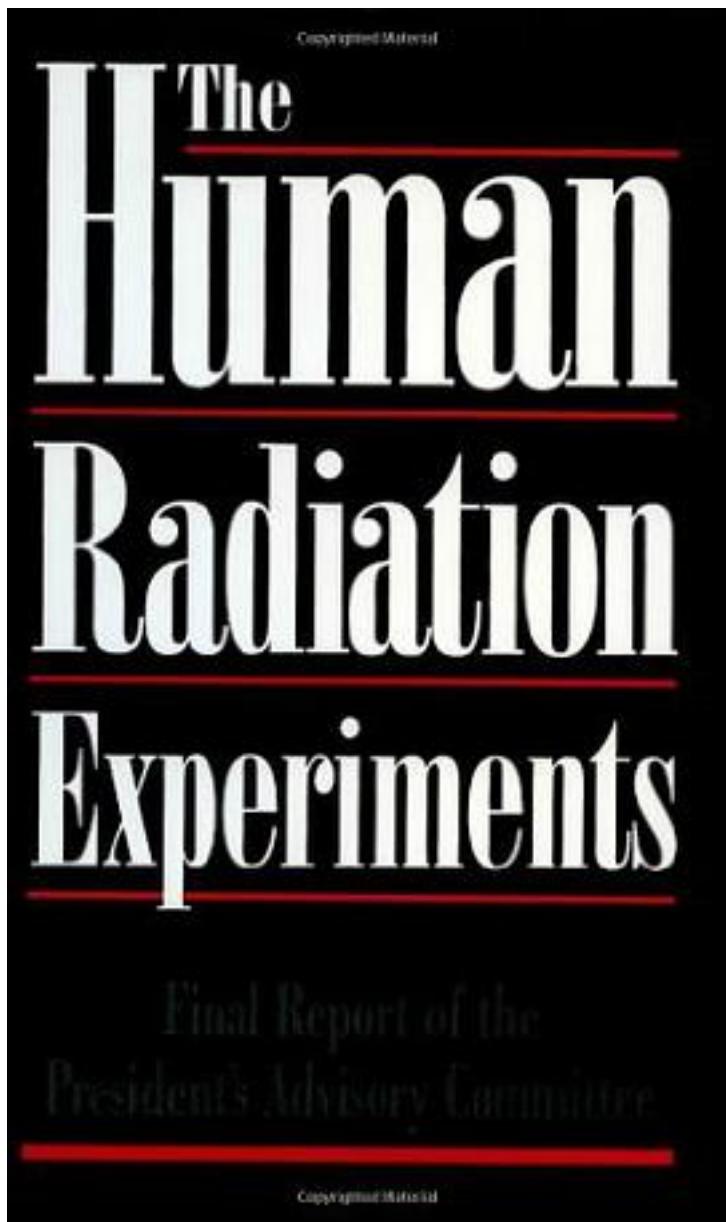


The Human Radiation Experiments



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This book describes, in fascinating detail, a variety of experiments sponsored by the U.S. government in which people were exposed to radiation without their knowledge. After reviewing hundreds of thousands of documents from the Atomic Energy Commission and other agencies, the Advisory Committee appointed by President Clinton in January 1994 found that nearly 4,000 human radiation experiments-most involving very low doses of radioactive tracers-were sponsored by the federal government between 1944-1974. This book documents these findings to provide a fascinating if not disturbing reminder of both the shocking standards for human experimentation and the shrouded practice of government secrecy in recent history. Carried out at the height of the Cold War, experiments included feeding radioactive cereal to teenagers at a school for the mentally retarded, irradiating the testicles of prison inmates, injecting plutonium into hospital patients, and intentional releases of radiation into the environment. The book places these experiments within their historical context, and a review of the relevant government policies and ethics standards at the time is included. The analysis is then applied to contemporary research on human subjects. The book concludes with a discussion of the Committee's key findings and a set of recommendations for changes in institutional review boards, the interpretation of ethics rules and policies, the conduct of research involving military personnel, the oversight and accountability for ethical violations, compensation for research injuries, and balancing national securities interests with the rights of the public. This compelling volume will prove to be a landmark in the development of standards for human experimentation. Ethicists, public health professionals and those interested in the history of medicine and Cold War history will be intrigued by the findings in this volume.

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