

the whole subject of clinical experimentation. The substance of this meeting will be released soon in a special issue of the academy's journal DAEDALUS.

Some people who have been working closely with the ethics question for years feel that public fuss will tend to obscure and interfere with long-term efforts.

One such person, a National Institutes of Health official, believes emphatically that ethics of experimentation are not a question for the medical profession alone to decide; most biomedical research today involves huge amounts of public money.

He feels that the heart transplants have tended to cause people to ignore issues even more difficult to deal with in other diseases: There are far more patients who will die without hemodialysis, for instance, than there are kidney machines to treat them. Who dies and who doesn't? Should hemodialysis patients come to the brink of death in a gruesome competition to see who can get sickest without dying?

But this physician notes that the majority of clinical research done in America is done under the strict safeguards of NIH. These regulations require any researcher getting an NIH grant to submit his project to the judgment of a committee of his peers, which weighs the risks against the potential worth of the test. The committee also determines whether or not the patients fully understand risks and possible benefits.

New legislation, the institutes official contends, cannot accomplish more than these regulations, because ultimately one has to depend on the conscience and good intent of the investigator.

TOES WET

Probing the ocean shallows

Ever since June 1966, when the Panel on Oceanography of the President's Science Advisory Committee first reported, the U.S. Government's oceanography program has been committed to promoting "effective use of the sea." Now the Government has drawn up plans for getting its toes wet on the continental shelf; any plunge to the mid-ocean depths will come in the indefinite future.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, as chairman of the National Council on Marine Resources and Engineering Development, outlined the plan and unveiled the council's latest report last week.

Practical plans in the report refer mainly to the surface of the ocean and the bottom under shallow water—the continental shelf and slope.

On the surface and near it plans concern mainly improvement of ocean



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transportation and fishing. On the shallow bottom and the coastline, concern is with such things as controlling coastal erosion, controlling pollution of coastal waters, and mapping and surveying the continental shelf in preparation for a later exploitation.

Extension of resource exploitation to the deep sea bottom is expected to come gradually as need dictates, and technology permits.

But its coming is being planned, although at a rather deliberate pace. The U.S. Government has consulted with 41 other governments about a treaty to set up a decade of international collaboration in oceanography, mainly dealing with the deep sea.

This and other questions of sovereignty are under consideration by an ad hoc committee of the United Nations.

The Administration would like to go slowly on the treaty, feeling, as the Vice President put it, that the international situation is not ready for it yet. Some in the Senate disagree; that body has before it a resolution by Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) embodying a draft treaty and intended to give the Administration a push.

Meanwhile the Administration, in its fiscal 1969 budget, asks for \$516 million for marine science and technology, up 15 percent from this year.

Some of the specific items: \$6 million for expansion of the sea grant college program, \$14.5 million for a new arctic and polar research ship, and \$16 million for mapping the continental shelf.

The Great Lakes, which can be classed as fresh-water seas, are also in the report. Pollution control, fisheries, water level, and serious problems of shore erosion are to be studied.

HEALTH REORGANIZATION

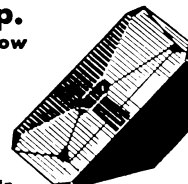
A first step taken

President Johnson has ordered the first step in the reorganization of the health functions of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (SN: 3/9 p. 231). But he has given no indication of the ultimate fate of the National Institutes of Health. That, presumably, still awaits the appointment of a new HEW secretary to succeed John W. Gardner—if a shift to independence for NIH hasn't been scrapped altogether.

What the President has done is to assign Assistant Secretary Philip R. Lee unified direction of all the department's health functions, including the Food and Drug Administration, the health activities of the Children's Bureau and the Public Health Service, as well as such service functions as Medicare and Medicaid.

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Note: Quotations from many more who know astronomy best will appear later.

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