



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Information Service

For Immediate Release: July 14, 1954

[Print PDF](#)

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today announced the Bureau of Indian Affairs has contracted with Cornell University Medical College, New York City, for the services of a physician specializing in diseases of the chest as a full-time staff member at the Navajo Medical Center, Fort Defiance, Arizona.

Dr. Avrum B. Organick has been assigned to Fort Defiance under the contract, which is for one year and subject to renewal. It is the first in a series of similar contracts, which the Bureau plans to negotiate with outstanding medical schools as part of a broad program to strengthen the staffs of its major medical centers, provide for better professional in-service training, and improve the quality of medical service to the Indian people.

The new chest specialist, who is already on duty at the Navajo Medical Center, will serve in several capacities. In addition to directing the care of tuberculous patients at Fort Defiance, he will advise and assist doctors at the other three Navajo hospitals in diseases of the chest, will take part in the Bureau's preventive medicine program on the Reservation, and will serve as a clinical teacher under the now in-service professional training program.

Under terms of the contract Dr. Organick will have direct access to the staff and laboratories of Cornell University Medical College and will thus be able to use these extensive technical resources in enriching the Navajo medical program.

A similar contract with Cornell providing for the services of a chief of surgery, fully trained and certified by the American Board of Surgery, is planned to be effective September 1. Additional contracts with a number of medical schools are planned to staff key clinical positions in such specialties as internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, radiology and pathology.

Once this staff pattern has been established, the Bureau will undertake a plan of rotating internships and residencies in both medicine and surgery as the final step in converting the Fort Defiance Hospital into an institution of high standards and effective service to the Navajo people.

<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/indian-bureau-contracts-cornell-medical-college-services-chest>