

MEDICINE

Cataracts Followed Use Of Dinitrophenol For Reducing

New Reducing Drug Warned Against by Physicians May Be Cause of Women's Rapidly Approaching Blindness

THE MEDICAL evidence grows more damaging against the new reducing drug, dinitrophenol.

Six cases of cataract, rare in young women, in which the only common factor has been the use of this drug in weight reduction, are reported by three San Francisco physicians. (*Journal, American Medical Association*, July 13).

To Dr. W. W. Boardman of San Francisco have come two women progressing toward blindness with a rapidity rarely observed before. Dr. Warren D. Horner and Dr. Richard Barr Jones of the same city cite instances of women patients likewise afflicted. These changes in the lens of the eye may result from the excessive burning up of body tissue produced by the drug, the physicians suggest. Dehydration may also be a factor. Another possible explanation may lie in some food deficiency, they surmise, as the six women were on a restricted diet while the drug was being used.

In editorial comment on three simultaneously published reports of rapidly developing cataract after the use of dinitrophenol, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* states that the development of cataract in these cases is a coincidence of medical interest regardless of whether it may be established that the dinitrophenol or something else caused the disturbance.

"It should, of course, be borne in mind," the medical publication asserts, "that dinitrophenol has not been standardized chemically. The possible occurrence of toxic contaminants in preparations of dinitrophenol must be considered.

"The possibility also exists that the cataracts may have resulted from associated malnutrition and an unbalanced diet, which are in many instances a part of the program of those who attempt rapid reduction of weight by the use of dinitrophenol and other methods. The *Journal* has warned its readers repeatedly against the dangers of uncontrolled use of new preparations of this type. The incidents here recited serve as a further warning against use of these products until the actual merits and dangers may

be more definitely determined."

Just a few days ago the council on pharmacy and chemistry of the American Medical Association refused to accept dinitrophenol and preparations containing it as a "new and non-official remedy," pointing out its dangers and urging that its use be restricted to selected patients under observation of properly trained physicians.

Now this drug can be obtained by anyone at any corner drug store.

Moreover about twenty commercial concerns are merchandising dinitrophenol or preparations in which it is an active principle. Some of these preparations are sold under trade names for reducing purposes so that those who use them may be endangered by the drug without knowing of their danger.

It is estimated that about 100,000 persons in America alone have used the drug for the treatment of obesity.

For the past fifty years scientists have studied the action of dinitrophenol and similar chemical compounds in accelerating metabolism, that is, the burning of tissues within the body. In 1933 its possible usefulness in treating obesity was shown by American studies but its dan-

gers were also soon shown.

Useful in making of dyes and explosives, dinitrophenol was known to be poisonous through its toxic effects on munitions and other industrial workers.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Prehistoric Mine Tragedy Revealed Too Late

CENTURIES late, archaeologists have rescued the body of a prehistoric miner, pinned down helplessly by a treacherous boulder in Mammoth Cave, Ky.

The ancient mine tragedy, brought to light by cave guides, has been investigated by Alonzo W. Pond and Louis Shelbach, archaeologists for the National Park Service. Shutting off "Mummy Ledge" to outsiders because of the fragile nature of the body, the archaeologists have treated the bones with airplane wing dope to strengthen them for removal.

"The miner," said Mr. Pond, "had evidently been digging for something in sand under rock which slipped and pinned him face down in the sand. The head, right shoulder, and upper arm and right ribs are exposed. The right arm was broken at the time of pinning."

Crude stone hammers for pecking off gypsum crystals from the cave walls and reed torches used for light are ancient mining equipment found in the cave. A woven fiber loin cloth, fiber cord, and a few other simple articles with the trapped miner are the only clues to his age and state of culture yet discovered.

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TRAPPED

This prehistoric miner was pinned beneath the rock no one knows how many years ago. He has just been found.