

MEDICINE

Sulfanilamide To Be Used In Offensive On Blindness

Trachoma, Affecting Some 30,000 Indians, Will Be Treated With New Chemical Which Seems to Cure It

SULFANILAMIDE, new chemical remedy that has already saved thousands of lives threatened by pneumonia, meningitis, childbed fever and streptococcus infections, is to be used next in a major offensive against blindness, especially among children. This developed at a conference of eye specialists with medical officers of the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The particular form of blindness to be attacked by sulfanilamide is that which results from trachoma, the very "catching" eye disease that afflicts between 2,000 and 3,000 new victims each year in the United States. About 17 out of every 100 persons who get trachoma go blind. Quarantine regulations forbid the entry into the United States of any person suffering with trachoma, but cured cases are allowed to enter.

Out of 140 trachoma patients treated with sulfanilamide, 114 were apparently cured, Dr. Fred Loe of the Indian Bureau, stationed at Rosebud, S. D., reported. Other eye specialists have reported similar encouraging results, especially in acute stages of the disease.

Dr. Loe says it is too early to call these cases "sure cures," because there may yet be relapses, but symptoms of the disease have disappeared in the patients treated and those not already permanently blinded can see again. One 47-year-old man reported he saw more than ever before during his entire life.

Encouraging results with sulfanilamide treatment in this serious eye disease have led to plans for its large-scale use among Indians, of whom some 30,000 suffer from the disease.

As soon as arrangements can be made, probably by Nov. 1, sulfanilamide treatment will be started among all child victims of the disease at the Tung River, Mont., Indian Reservation. At one school of 130 pupils there, 84 cases of trachoma have been reported. Children with trachoma at other Indian schools will be given the treatment as soon thereafter as arrangements can be made. The schools at Chenawa, near Salem, Ore., and at Fort Defiance, Ariz., are slated

for inclusion in the drive on trachoma with this new weapon.

Adults are not being neglected, but the drive is being started among children because they can be reached through the schools and given continuous treatment there, and also because there is some tendency for the condition to "burn itself out" in older patients.

Trachoma, recognized by Egyptian doctors centuries before the Christian era, is more widespread among Indians than whites in the United States. Navajo Indians are particularly afflicted with it.

The condition starts with little soft lumps on the eyelids. Inflammation, discharge and a thick fleshy film growing over the eye follow. This film blocks vision, and the scars it leaves when it subsides may cause permanent blindness.

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ETHNOLOGY

Primitive Man Took His Pink Elephants Seriously

WHEN primitive man got drunk he took his "pink elephants" seriously.

Drinking for fun is a civilized custom, Matthew W. Stirling, chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, declared, addressing the scientific Cosmos Club. Primitive people had no connoisseur spirit. They drank mainly for religion to get visions and experiences which they considered supernatural.

"I think drinking must have begun first for the supernatural effects it produced," was Mr. Stirling's verdict.

Tracing the family tree of the cocktail and highball, Mr. Stirling finds that somewhere in the Stone Age men began supplementing nature's two basic drinks—milk and water—with more potent concoctions.

"It is amazing," he commented, "the lengths to which the human race will go to avoid drinking water."

Beer has been found in late Stone Age man's jugs, but distilling came later. The oldest record Mr. Stirling can find of

it is Aristotle's reference to "burning water." All over the world, he said, these drinks have names that mean fire water, not because of the fiery sensation in the throat but because they can be set aflame with a light.

Speakeasies where people secretly drank tea, coffee, and chocolate were a social problem in Europe within recent centuries, said Mr. Stirling, pointing out that these three drinks were introduced into Europe during the exploration era around 1500 A. D., and that they were all first used as drugs and then as drinks of supposedly wicked habit-forming powers. Chocolate, considered the most vicious, was the subject of stringent prohibition laws.

Beer gardens and bars flourished 2,000 years ago, Mr. Stirling said, describing a bar with all the familiar features except the foot rail, recently unearthed at ruins of Ostia, seaport of Rome. The bar in Ostia has a marble top, shelves for the stock, a storage cellar for wines, two stone seats for casual customers and a garden at the back where people evidently tarried to drink, since there were bronze hooks on a marble slab for hanging wraps.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Ancient Rome's Port Unearthed For Fair

BECAUSE modern Rome is to hold a World's Fair in 1942, the ruins of ancient Rome's seaport—Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber—are to be completely unearthed.

For the past 30 years, Prof. Guido Calzi has been digging away at Ostia. Ever so often, he has had surprising and intriguing news to relate.

Ostia, it has developed, did some of its shopping in a three-story department store, a grand affair with display windows. Merchants rented quarters inside. It was probably the first big department store Romans knew. An incidental point of interest is a swastika design in one of the ancient floors, said to have pleased the modern Nazi leader when it was shown him.

Some of Ostia's people lived in flats. The city had apartment houses four and five stories high.

Ostia, it seems, was quite a town, despite its second-fiddle role as Rome's market-town seaport. Ostia's population rose to 100,000. And far from being entirely a place of warehouses, wharves, and heavy traffic, the seaport boasted beautiful buildings, a forum, public