

MEDICINE

New Sulfa Drug May Prevent As Well As Cure Meningitis

War-Censor-Delayed Reports Tell of Significant Advances Toward Control of Diphtheria As Well

HOPE that sulfadiazine, one of the newest of the sulfa drugs, may prove the means of preventing as well as curing meningitis appears in a war-censor-delayed report just made public.

Significant advances towards the control of diphtheria and scarlet fever as well as meningitis, were made in Halifax, N. S., this winter during epidemics which threatened to slow that prize port's steady flow of supplies to embattled Britain. The war plague fight was made by 11 American men and women comprising the Harvard Medical School expedition. Under the leadership of Dr. J. Howard Mueller, this expedition spent four weeks in the disease-ridden city studying these infections and helping local authorities to bring them under control.

The story of the expedition can be told now because the menacing epidemics have been checked; because measures have been taken which make their recurrence unlikely; and because the advances made are going to be used to strengthen America's defenses against disease.

Sulfadiazine proved the hero in the meningitis situation. This disease was never as rampant in Halifax as was diphtheria, but it was a constant smouldering threat. The new sulfa drug was used by Dr. John H. Dingle, of the Harvard expedition, to control the situation. It appeared "to have certain advantages" over other sulfa drugs used against meningitis and was felt to be especially valuable in solving the important problem of carriers of the disease.

This is because sulfadiazine not only helps the patient to get well but apparently swiftly banishes the meningitis germs from his nose and throat, where they may lurk long after he is well, constituting a hazard to other persons.

"The suggestion is obvious," Dr. Mueller reported, "that healthy carriers may be similarly cleared up."

This theory could not be verified experimentally in Halifax but it has since

been confirmed by an Ottawa physician who studied troops in that area. It is an entirely new idea and one completely contrary to the experience of the last war. It may, doctors believe, be the beginning of the end of the carrier problem in meningitis.

A new and better technic for diagnosing meningitis which has certain advantages making it "particularly suitable for military use under field conditions" was developed through a new culture medium for growing meningitis germs prepared by Dr. Mueller.

A better method for dealing with the problem of protecting adults against diphtheria and more knowledge about scarlet fever, including discovery of a new strain of scarlet fever germs, are other advances made by the expedition.

The official report is being forwarded to the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service so that this na-

tion may profit from the Halifax experience in fighting war plagues.

Science News Letter, April 5, 1941

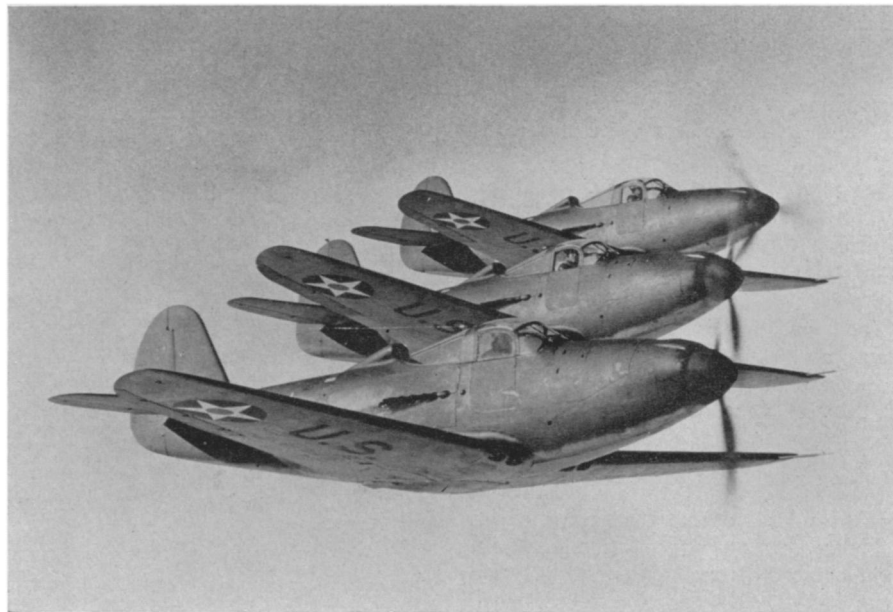
PUBLIC HEALTH

Tuberculosis Is Fought Among Defense Workers

UNCLE SAM is going to great lengths to make sure that among the million or more young men in army training camps there will be none whose health is not good enough to stand the rigorous life and activities of a soldier in training.

Behind the training camp front is another vast and growing army of men and women working in the factories that produce defense weapons. They also are subject to certain strains on health and endurance, strains which will be increased by the speed-up of production for defense. These extra strains, plus the fact that many of the industrial workers will be living in crowded quarters, at least temporarily, and may be deprived of certain necessities by mounting prices, are conditions that threaten health in many ways and particularly carry the threat of increased spread of tuberculosis.

The way to stop the spread of tuberculosis is to find the people who have the disease and keep them from contact with others while the disease is in the infectious stage. In the early stages of



PRECISION

This difficult close-order flying maneuver is being executed by three Army Air Corps flyers from Selfridge Field who had never seen this Aeracobra Interceptor Pursuit plane until the day before. The photograph was taken by the Bell Aircraft Corp., who certify: "This is an actual photograph, no retouching, no super-imposing, so help us!"