

MEDICINE

New Polio Treatment

Recovery was hastened in most of group of 20 patients when they were given prostigmine, drug used in muscle weakness disease.

► RECOVERY from infantile paralysis was hastened in most of a group of 20 patients by prostigmine, given hypodermically and by mouth, Dr. Herman Kabat and Dr. Miland E. Knapp, of the University of Minnesota, report (*Journal, American Medical Association*, Aug. 7).

Prostigmine has been used heretofore in myasthenia gravis, a disease of muscle weakness. In this disease it strikingly relieves the fatigue of the skeletal muscles.

In infantile paralysis this drug relieves the excessive muscle tone or tension and the muscle spasm and also reduces incoordination. The effect may appear as soon as one hour after the drug has been given. One 17-year-old girl, for example, was left six months after the start of infantile paralysis with a flexion deformity of her hand such that the examiner could not straighten the patient's fingers or extend her wrist. One hour after injection of prostigmine, this deformity completely disappeared. Other affected muscles also improved as the

treatment was continued and the doctors believe that recovery was speeded in her case, as in most of the other 19, by the prostigmine.

Atropine is usually given with the prostigmine, to offset certain undesirable effects. In most cases the hot fomentations of the Kenny treatment were given along with the prostigmine treatment, but the doctors believe the improvement was much more rapid than usually follows the hot foment treatment alone.

The prostigmine was started in some cases within three or four weeks after onset of the disease and in other cases several months later. In one case the prostigmine was started 16 months after onset. This patient, one hour after injection of prostigmine with atropine, was able for the first time in 16 months to bend over and touch the floor with the knuckles of her hands while keeping her knees straight.

In two patients with severe involvement, there was little recovery after the prostigmine treatment.

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MEDICINE

Appendicitis an Allergy?

Theory advanced that swelling of appendix tissue is similar to swelling of other tissues in hay fever. Surgery required, nevertheless.

► APPENDICITIS may be due to allergic reactions similar to those causing the symptoms of hay fever, asthma, hives and the like, Dr. L. O. Dutton, of El Paso, Texas, declares in a new medical journal, the *Annals of Allergy* (July-August).

This bi-monthly journal, published in St. Paul, Minn., is the official organ of the newly organized American College of Allergists. This new scientific body aims, among other things, to bridge the gap between doctors specializing in treatment of allergy, the many other practicing physicians "who are applying allergy to their practice," and the non-clinical scientists such as biochemists,

pharmacologists, botanists and plant pathologists who contribute to knowledge of allergy and its management.

The theory that appendicitis is due to allergy does not, Dr. Dutton emphatically states, contradict the fact that it must be treated by surgery. Prompt diagnosis and prompt operation to remove the inflamed appendix before it ruptures and causes death-dealing peritonitis is required, regardless of whether or not the appendicitis was caused by allergy.

The allergic theory, however, if proved valid and sound, "offers some hope of prophylaxis," he states.

Scientists have never agreed on one

single cause for appendicitis, he points out. In some cases the cause is mechanical obstruction due to fecaliths, kinks or adhesive bands. Functional obstruction due to swelling is supposed to occur frequently. Such swelling and engorgement of the appendix tissue is similar, Dr. Dutton points out, to the swelling which characterizes allergy in other conditions as, for example, hay fever. Careful study of over 120 cases of appendicitis and the appendices removed at operation strengthened Dr. Dutton in the theory which previous experience had suggested.

In 87 of these patients, moreover, 45, or more than 50%, gave a history of definite hay fever, asthma or hives existing before the appendicitis attack. Although based on too few cases to be statistically reliable, Dr. Dutton says, the figures are nevertheless impressive in contrast with the fact that these three allergic conditions occur in less than 10% of the general population.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Infantile Paralysis Outbreak Keeping Up

► THE infantile paralysis outbreak in the Southwest is keeping up, with enough new cases reported to jump the total figures for the nation from 329 on July 24 to 359 for the week ending July 31, reports to the U. S. Public Health Service show.

Texas with 105 and California with 104 still had the largest number of cases. Oklahoma reported 30, a slight decrease over the previous week's 42. Kansas reported 30 cases the last week in July, contrasted with seven the previous week.

Dysentery cases have been running almost twice as high throughout the nation, so far this year, as during the first seven months of last year. Lack of adequate sanitation in eating establishments and carelessness of food handlers now being employed is thought to be a possible explanation for the increase.

A new record low in typhoid fever cases and deaths will be set this year, figures for the first seven months indicate. Up to July 24 this year there were 2,424 cases reported, while during the same period last year the figure was 3,144.

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North Dakota's fur harvest for 1942 totaled nearly \$1,000,000.