

MEDICINE

Drug Aids Thyroid

The depressing effects of certain sulfa drugs on thyroid glands give lead for the treatment of troublesome disease marked by over-active thyroid.

► "WHAT'S one man's poison may be another man's medicine."

This paraphrase of an old adage is suggested by a report of successful use of a thyroid-depressing drug, thiouracil, in treatment of nine cases of thyrotoxicosis, a troublesome and hard-to-cure disease caused by over-activity of the thyroid gland, by Dr. Robert H. Williams and Dr. Grosvenor W. Bissell of the Harvard Medical School (*Science*, Aug. 13).

The hint that ultimately led to the new treatment was hidden in the ill effects exerted upon some patients by certain of the sulfa drugs, and also by related compounds in the thiourea group. There was strong evidence that these chemicals interfered with the normal activity of the thyroid gland, cutting down its necessary secretions.

The idea suggested itself that this thyroid-depressing group of compounds might contain at least one member that would be useful in cases where such depressive action was to be sought rather than avoided, that is, where the patient

was suffering from too much activity on the part of his thyroid gland.

One drug of the thiourea group, thiouracil, was found most effective. First treatments were reported early this year by another Boston physician, Dr. E. B. Astwood. They were successful as long as they were continued, but the untoward symptoms returned when treatment was stopped.

The new group of nine patients reported by Drs. Williams and Bissell included several very severe cases of thyrotoxicosis, which had been active from six months to two years, except in one of the patients who appeared to have had the malady for 22 years. In all cases marked improvement began in a short time, and the patients were all restored to apparently normal health in from three to six weeks.

The two researchers state that they are continuing their studies, with the special objective of discovering the optimum amount of the drug to be administered.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943



MERCY BOMB — *Dropped by a Coast Guard plane, this new bomb carries life, not death. It is loaded with food and medical supplies. The bomb was developed by Coast Guardsman Harold V. Booth and Frederick H. Denio under the supervision of Commander R. L. Burke, commanding officer of the U. S. Coast Guard Air Station, Elizabeth, N. J., to meet the urgent need for a practical method of dropping supplies to survivors of lost ships.*

Medical Research Council, and the Agricultural Research Council, the principal research agencies of the British government.

In a press conference, Sir John told of recent advances in British science:

Many civilian scientists are working in the front lines with land, sea and air forces to demonstrate new scientific devices and learn at first hand the needs of the fighting forces.

The British people are being fed under the ration well above the subsistence level at what is believed to be the efficiency level, and are healthier than they have ever been in all history.

Development of British radio-location devices, called radar in this country, has made them effective in detecting submarines.

Improved varieties of seed and increased use of mechanized devices for farming have caused a considerable increase in British agricultural production.

Cooperation between British and American scientists has been developed to a very high degree.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943

GENERAL SCIENCE

Scientists to Cooperate

Proposal that British and American scientists work closer together designed to secure better distribution of scientific information rather than its utilization.

► A NEW COOPERATIVE committee of British and American scientists to secure better distribution of scientific knowledge is being proposed by the British government as a desirable activity for better coordination of war and post-war aims in research fields.

This was made known by the Rt. Hon. Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Privy Council and member of the British War Cabinet, during his visit to Washington.

The proposal which originated in discussions of the Royal Society in London has not yet been made officially to U. S. authorities, it is understood, and the proposed body might very well be un-

official in character and a matter of arrangement between scientific organizations in the nations concerned.

The committee would first be limited to English-speaking nations and later if successful be extended to other nations, Sir John indicated.

The chief concern of the new international organization would be the interchange of information rather than its utilization. The principal difficulty in getting the cooperation underway, Sir John indicated, is the lack of time on the part of scientists to undertake the necessary visits and discussions.

Sir John supervises the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the