

MEDICINE

Short Impetigo Treatment

Indian dislike of bandages combined with medical skill resulted in new 24-hour conquest of persistent skin infection.

► FROM a combination of Indian dislike of bandages and medical skill has come a 24-hour conquest of one of the most persistent of skin infections, impetigo contagiosa.

The new treatment consists of placing on the sores a jelly consisting of 25% sulfadiazine in methyl cellulose. This mixture forms a water-soluble plastic coating over the lesions and obviates the need of bandages. The sulfa drug is effective in healing the surface sores caused by the impetigo bacteria and seldom is more than one application necessary.

A husband and wife team, Dr. M. Pijoan and Mrs. J. Pijoan, together with F. Worman, working at the U. S. Indian Service Nutrition Laboratory and University of New Mexico, developed the treatment (*Southwestern Medicine*, May). Since the work was done, Dr. Pijoan has been commissioned a lieutenant in

the Navy and is on the research staff at the Naval Medical Research Center, Bethesda, Md.

Treatment of impetigo afflicting Indian patients was found by Dr. Pijoan to be particularly difficult because they consider bandages over skin sores somewhat of a disgrace. The patients tore off the dressings once they were out of sight of the doctor.

A search was begun for a method of treatment that did not require bandages. It resulted in the sulfadiazine-methocel dressing. Earlier researches showed that sulfonamide ointments or microcrystals gave striking results, while sulfa drugs in methyl cellulose had been used successfully in treating burns. The new impetigo treatment was developed from both techniques.

Controlled tests on a hundred Spanish-American school children showed the effectiveness of the treatment.

Science News Letter, September 25, 1943

MEDICINE

Sulfa Saves Newborn

Latest triumph of useful family of drugs is the rescue of babies from blindness and from death due to epidemic diarrhea.

► SAVING NEWBORN babies from blindness and death are the latest triumphs credited to the sulfa drugs in medical reports.

Epidemic diarrhea of the newborn is the killing disease from which babies are now being saved by succinylsulfathiazole. This infant killer usually strikes before the baby is a month old, often, before he has left the hospital where he was born. Many a hospital has had to close its nursery temporarily while the staff tried frantically to check the epidemic and to find a way of preventing future ones.

The triumph of succinylsulfathiazole in this baffling disease is reported by Dr. Allan H. Twyman and Dr. George R. Horton, of Indianapolis (*Journal, American Medical Association*, Sept. 18).

Knowing that this comparatively new sulfa drug was especially good at fighting germs in the intestinal tract, these doctors used it for 11 babies suffering with epidemic diarrhea of the newborn. All but two of the babies promptly got well. The two deaths, the doctors believe, were due to inadequate dosage of the drugs.

As a check, 11 babies were given standard non-sulfa drug treatment for the same condition. Twice as many babies died, and those that recovered had to stay in the hospital under treatment almost twice as long as the sulfa-drug-treated babies. They did not catch up to the weight gains made in eight days by the sulfa drug babies.

Anti-bleeding vitamin K must be given with the sulfa drug, the doctors

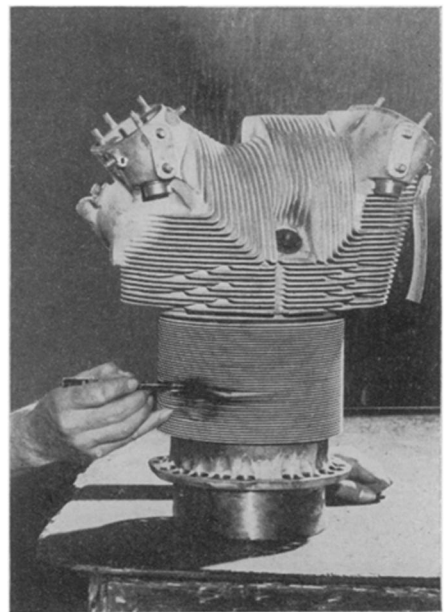
warn, because the drug reduces the number of bacteria normally in the intestines which help the body to absorb the vitamin.

"Babies' sore eyes," due to gonorrhea and frequently a cause of blindness, can be swiftly cured without complications and without relapse by sulfathiazole given by mouth, Dr. Marvin L. Blumberg and Dr. Morris Gleich, of Harlem Hospital, New York City, report to the same issue of the medical journal.

In spite of routine use of silver nitrate drops in the eyes of newborn babies, this eye disease continues to be a serious problem, they point out. Other methods of treatment take a long time to clear up the condition, when they do succeed, and are "exhausting," the physicians state.

With sulfathiazole in adequate dosage by mouth, the condition cleared up in one to four days. There was no need to treat the eyes themselves, except to wipe away pus, and the babies ate well and gained weight.

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BULLET-RIDDLED — Experts are studying this Wright Cyclone engine cylinder, back from "somewhere in the Pacific" (See SNL, May 23, 1942). The ragged hole is where a 50-caliber enemy bullet completely pierced the cylinder barrel. In spite of the puncture, the tough engine kept operating.