ing places where infected food was probably the source of the trouble.

Science News Letter, April 1, 1944

Tropical Diseases

➤ THE DANGER that exotic tropical diseases will be spread widely through this country by returning service men is not great, Dr. R. E. Dyer, director of the National Institute of Health, U. S. Public Health Service, told state and territorial health officers at their conference in Washington.

Besides malaria, our troops serving in the tropics are exposed to trypanosomiasis, one form of which is the deadly African sleeping sickness; leishmaniasis; schistosomiasis; and filariasis.

Malaria and filariasis, however, are the only two over which health officers in the U. S. need be concerned, Dr. Dyer said. While malaria is endemic, that is, always present, in certain parts of the South and a few other places, there probably will be opportunity for the temporary spread of the disease in other areas through the return of infected service men.

Malaria and filariasis probably will not become a public health problem in this country through the establishment of foci or centers of infection. It is important, however, for physicians to watch for signs of infection in discharged troops, Dr. Dyer warned, so that proper treatment of the infected persons can be instituted.

Few American physicians except those now serving with the forces in the tropics have ever seen a case of filariasis, and many physicians are not familiar with malaria. They may, therefore, mistake these diseases for other conditions and suitable treatment may not be given and suitable precautions against spread of the diseases may not be taken.

The danger of filariasis ever becoming established in this country is slight, Dr. Dyer believes. Small foci of infection in areas where it has not previously existed may develop after the return of service men who have the larval worms in their blood and are bitten by the kinds of mosquitoes that transmit the parasites.

These foci will die out, Dr. Dyer believes, just as the one in Charleston, S. C., has. Filariasis existed there for 150 years without ever becoming established in other parts of the country, he pointed out.

While opportunities for the establishment of these exotic diseases are distinctly limited, Dr. Dyer cautioned health officers to be alert to the possibility and to be prepared to undertake measures for their control.

Science News Letter, April 1, 1944

MEDICINE

Preventing Infant Deaths

Hope raised by research that way may be found to keep Rh blood factor from causing childless marriages. Factor present in 85% of white individuals.

➤ NEW HOPE that science may some day develop a way of preventing one of the most serious causes of infant deaths and childless marriages is provided in a report by Dr. Alexander S. Wiener, Miss Eve B. Sonn and Mrs. Ruth B. Belkin, of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, New York City (*Journal of Experimental Medicine,* March 1)

The hopeful suggestion, which may some day prevent countless family tragedies, comes as a result of studies of a factor only recently discovered in human blood, called the Rh factor. (*See SNL,* Nov. 27, 1943) The distribution of this blood factor seems to differ in different human races, but in the white race it is present in the blood of about 85% of individuals.

The Rh factor is harmless in itself, but if blood containing the Rh factor is mingled with blood not containing it, then serious difficulties may arise. Dr. Wiener believes that the person lacking Rh may become sensitized to the Rh blood factor in a way similar to that in which some persons are allergic to ragweed pollen. A way may be found, Dr. Wiener hopes, to desensitize such persons just as hayfever patients are desensitized by injections of the materials to which they are sensitive.

If a mother has blood not containing Rh and her unborn baby has inherited the Rh factor from the father, then anti-Rh antibodies may be built up in the blood of the mother that may result in the sickness or death of this baby and any Rh-positive babies resulting later from the same marriage.

About one in 50 of the mothers lacking Rh become thus sensitized to Rh when they carry a baby with the Rh blood, Dr. Wiener has found. In case such a sensitized mother should be given a blood transfusion containing Rh blood, the mother would be in serious danger and might die. Many such double tragedies of mother and infant deaths occurred before the Rh blood factor was known, it is believed. Now Rh-negative blood is used in such a case.

At present, no way is known to prevent the sickness or death of the unfortunate babies who have Rh fathers and Rh-negative mothers. But, Dr. Wiener believes, the possibility exists that some method may be developed for desensitizing mothers so that the baby may be saved. Research based on this hope has already been started with the aid of a grant from the United Hospital fund.

Study of the blood of 97 families with 275 children and 135 mother-child combinations, reported by Dr. Wiener and his associates in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine,* confirms the theory previously developed that the Rh factor

AIR WAVES—The part these two WAVES are playing, in manning the shore jobs so that men can be released for the fighting fronts, is a highly technical one. The aerographer's mate (left) is loosing a pilot balloon at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., while the officer aerologist (right) prepares to follow the path of the balloon with a theodolite. Their study of atmospheric conditions is essential for maintenance of an air station. Official U. S. Navy photo.