

PUBLIC HEALTH

Measles Preventive

War Department announces that the Army has gamma globulin, which is effective in controlling the disease. Comes from blood collected by Red Cross.

► THE WAR Department announced that it has on hand large supplies of a new, effective measles preventive that can be given soldiers exposed to the disease.

The preventive is known scientifically as gamma globulin. It is being obtained from plasma from the blood collected by the Red Cross for the armed services.

Research by Dr. Edwin J. Cohn, of Harvard Medical School, led to the development of this measles preventive. Dr. Cohn has succeeded in separating from blood plasma by chemical means various components or fractions. One such fraction is fibrin foam, now being used to stop bleeding in surgical operations (See SNL, April 29 and May 6). Another is the gamma globulin, which contains the antibodies developed in the blood to fight an invasion of measles

germs. Presence of these antibodies developed in a person's blood during an attack of measles explains why he ordinarily does not get a second attack.

Since most grown-ups have had measles, the blood they donate to the Red Cross contains these antibodies and also antibodies against other diseases to which they may have built up immunity.

Measles has so far been a very slight problem in the Army, with a very low occurrence rate compared with that of the last war, when at one Army camp alone hundreds of new cases developed day after day and every arriving troop train had from one to six cases in the eruptive, very infectious stage.

Memory of these thousands of soldiers who had measles, many of them dying from the pneumonia that fol-

lowed, led to establishment in 1940 of a Commission on Measles and Mumps under the direction of Dr. Joseph Stokes, Jr., of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School.

This Commission and nine others making up the Board for the Investigation and Control of Influenza and Other Epidemic Diseases in the Army, with Dr. Francis G. Blake as president, function under the direction of the Preventive Medicine Service of the Office of the Surgeon General.

For over a year members of the Commission on Measles have studied the new measles preventive. Most of the work, the War Department announcement states, was done at Army camps but a significant study was carried out during an outbreak of measles at an eastern girls' college. Among 67 students given the globulin, only one developed an average case of measles, while 18 out of 38 not given the globulin developed average measles.

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Whooping-Cough Epidemic Tests Vaccination Value

► BECAUSE whooping cough hits Iceland in regular epidemic waves at about seven-year intervals, it has been possible to make a test of the value of vaccination as a preventive of that disease, not possible under the less clear-cut conditions prevalent elsewhere. Story of the test is told in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (May 20) by Dr. Niels Dungal of New York City and two Icelandic colleagues, Dr. Skuli Thoroddsen and Dr. Hreidar Agustsson, both of the University of Iceland in Reykjavik.

There has long been a considerable degree of uncertainty regarding the value of vaccination against whooping cough, the three investigators point out, because there is no way of knowing whether vaccinated children in most countries fail to develop the disease because they are actually protected or merely because they have not subsequently been exposed. The seven-year epidemics in Iceland, however, leave no doubts: when one of them is raging everybody is certain to be exposed, so that failure to develop symptoms can logically mean only that the person concerned is immune.

In a careful follow-through after vaccination of 770 fully vaccinated Icelandic children, it was found that 28.3% did not develop whooping-cough at all,



RECENT ADDITION—This is the eight-ton Armored Car M8, designed by the Ordnance Department to combine the speed and maneuverability of an automobile with the punch and armored protection of a light tank. It has a protectively low silhouette, resembling a turtle's back, and mounts both a 37 mm. cannon and .30 caliber machine gun. A crew of four handles this vehicle, which is intended primarily as a combat reconnaissance car. U. S. Army Signal Corps photograph.