

MEDICINE

Colchicine for Leukemia

Given when the disease was acute and soon after the symptoms had appeared, the patient's life was prolonged, although not saved.

► A NEW kind of attack on acute leukemia, fatal disease of the blood-forming organs, is reported by Dr. W. Harding Kneedler, of Philadelphia, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (Sept. 22). This is the trial of colchicine in treatment of the disease.

In the case in which Dr. Kneedler tried it, the patient's life was perhaps prolonged although not saved. The drug was given when the disease was acute and soon after symptoms had appeared. The patient's downhill course slackened through eight months and there was a three-month period of improvement with gain in weight and strength before she slipped into the final stages of the disease.

Although Dr. Kneedler says that no conclusions as to the beneficial effects of colchicine can be drawn from this case, he believes further trial of the drug

seems justified.

He used it at the suggestion of Dr. O. H. Perry Pepper, professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, who had previously tried it in two cases. In one of these it had no effect but in the other there was complete abatement of symptoms for a time although this patient also subsequently died. There is one other report in medical literature of its trial in acute leukemia.

Colchicine is obtained from the autumn-flowering crocus of Europe and Asia. It has been used as a remedy for gout and rheumatism. Its effect in arresting the phase of cell division known as mitosis in plants and animals, and the special susceptibility of rapidly growing malignant tissue like cancer to colchicine, form the basis for its trial in leukemia.

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Penicillin Inhalations

Can be given in doctor's office to help colds, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonitis and allergies. Brings chemical into direct contact with germs at invasion site.

► THE PATIENT who gets bronchitis, an asthma attack, pneumonitis, or even a cold or migraine headaches this coming winter may get relief through penicillin mist inhalation treatments given at his doctor's office or his own home.

These and other disabilities in more than 200 patients have been relieved or improved by this use of the mold chemical, technically known as aerosol penicillin, Dr. Herbert N. Vermilye, of Forest Hills, N. Y., reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (Sept. 22).

While penicillin is not effective against the virus of the common cold, Dr. Vermilye found that patients got over colds faster when given the penicillin mist inhalations. This was especially true in the case of persons who usually develop a heavy cough with much sputum a few days after the cold starts. Many were ap-

parently well in one or two days although the treatment was continued for five days. Dr. Vermilye believes the reason for this rapid recovery is that the penicillin prevented secondary bacterial infections arising to complicate the cold.

Patients getting this treatment have a feeling of well-being and their appetites improve. This may be one factor, Dr. Vermilye suggests, that leads to the rapid recovery.

Migraine, high blood pressure, eczema, rosacea, colitis, extreme fatigue and even mild psychoneurosis are other conditions which were helped by the penicillin mist inhalations, Dr. Vermilye reports. He explains that this was because the conditions were the result of allergy to bacteria infecting the nose, throat and sinuses. Dr. Vermilye does not suggest that such conditions due to causes other than bacterial allergy would be helped

by penicillin mist inhalations.

The fact that aerosol penicillin can be given in the doctor's office or the patient's home, instead of by hypodermic injection every three hours in a hospital, gives it many obvious practical advantages. From the standpoint of treatment, this use of penicillin has the advantage of bringing the mold chemical into direct contact with the disease germs at the site of their invasion of the body.

The rapid improvement in such stubborn conditions as intrinsic bacterial asthma is "notable," Dr. Vermilye states. By intrinsic bacterial asthma he means a kind believed due to chronic infection in the upper respiratory tract. The results in this condition, Dr. Vermilye states, encourage the hope that "at last a promising therapeutic weapon is available for that intractable condition."

Acute and relapsing pneumonitis due to various cocci, tonsillitis, sinusitis, sino-bronchitis and pharyngitis with stomach and intestinal symptoms are other conditions in which Dr. Vermilye reports aerosol penicillin was beneficial.

The apparatus used for converting the penicillin into a very fine mist is available from most oxygen equipment companies and may be obtained for about \$10 if a small portable oxygen tank is used, Dr. Vermilye states. With 10 or more outfits a physician can treat at least 20 patients a week without the assistance of a nurse, once the patient understands how to take the inhalations.

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ELASTIC—Bouncy sodium silicate is created when the silicate has dried to about 94% of its original content. The material can be rolled into a ball that will rebound like rubber.