

MEDICINE

Hayfever Cures Come, Go

Giving chemicals to weeds instead of patients might be best attack on the disease. Psychic factor needs consideration in judging value of new remedies.

► GIVING THE chemicals to the weeds rather than to people is probably the best way to get rid of hayfever. While the half-dozen or so new drugs for hayfever reported in the past six months may relieve symptoms, the weeds whose pollen causes the misery in sensitive persons can be eradicated by chemical spray or fog.

This is one of the peacetime benefits we can have from our biological warfare research which included potential chemical warfare on food crops as well as germ warfare on humans and domestic animals.

The new weed-killer 2,4-D, which was studied in these researches, can be a peaceful weapon to free millions of hayfever sufferers now and in the future. All that is necessary is to lay down a fog of this chemical on roadsides, empty lots and other areas infested with ragweed, the chief cause of hayfever. The fogging when done at a very early stage of flower development will kill the plants before they shed any pollen. Drs. Frederick G. Smith, Charles M. Hamner and Robert F. Carlson found in tests at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, N. Y.

So far as chemicals to attack the disease in patients are concerned, medical authorities are likely to be skeptical about even the newest for which great claims are made, a substance called "Anthallan." Hayfever remedies come and go almost every year. Doctors undoubtedly will want to see results from carefully controlled studies before prescribing Anthallan to their patients.

The hayfever drug arousing most enthusiasm in the medical world at present is benadryl. Even this chemical has its limitations. It is not considered a cure, but a medicine that relieves symptoms in hayfever and hives. It is less effective in asthma.

Psychic factors play a very important part in hayfever, asthma, hives, and other allergic disorders. The repeated visits to the doctor or clinic and ensuing attention when a new drug is being tried for hayfever may play a large part in the beneficial results obtained at first. In

carefully controlled studies, this factor is ruled out by substituting placebos, pills or capsules that look just like the drug under trial, for the drug itself for a time. If the patient continues to be helped, the improvement obviously is not due to the new drug. Whether such studies have been made with Anthallan is not known to authorities.

Since the psychic factor is important in allergic disorders, many patients may be helped by treatment for the underlying emotional or personality disturbance without the use of medicine or of desensitizing injections.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Peruvian City Was Largest Ancient Center

► NEITHER the glory that was Greece nor the grandeur that was Rome produced the largest city in any ancient civilization, archaeologists of the Smithsonian Institution have decided.

The honor, they say, of being the largest ancient city probably should go to

Chanchan, a Peruvian center centuries before the Inca Empire that the Spaniards overthrew.

Eleven square miles of ruins of this ancient city are located near the Viru Valley in Northern Peru where the most intensive archaeological studies yet conducted in South America are underway.

Center of the new research is the valley that was a site of flourishing culture long before the more famous Incas that the first European discoverers encountered. The Viru Valley is now about 20 miles long and three to four miles wide, and is believed to have had a larger habitable area at the time when it was a center of the ancient civilization.

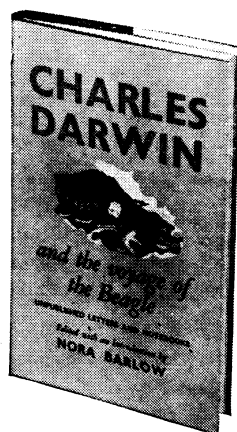
How the valley grew smaller is one of the problems that is to be studied. The habitable portion of the valley has been subject to alkalization of the soil by alkali-loaded irrigation waters from the Andes, and much may be learned about long-range planning for irrigation projects by tracing the history of this ancient development.

The work in the Viru Valley is being conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Andean Research, with seven cooperating institutions. They are the Bureau of American Ethnology and the Institute of Social Anthropology of the Smithsonian Institution, Columbia University, Yale University, the American Museum of Natural History, the Chicago Natural History Museum and the Institute de Estudios Etnologicos of Peru.

Science News Letter, June 22, 1946

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