



ARTIST-SCIENTIST—Capt. Charles Bittinger, physicist who painted for the Navy the Bikini atom bomb explosion, shows his picture of Baker explosion to Dr. Vannevar Bush (center), president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and wartime director of OSRD, and Dr. Edward U. Condon of the National Bureau of Standards at the reception commemorating the hundredth birthday of the Smithsonian Institution.

MEDICINE

Erythrin vs. Diphtheria

Penicillin-like antibiotic comes from red blood cells of rabbits. Discovery may open a whole new branch of science of antibiotics.

► A NEW penicillin-like drug extracted from the red blood cells of rabbits and other animals is now under clinical trial as a weapon against diphtheria in several Moscow clinics.

First-hand account of this new development in disease-fighting is being given American scientists by Dr. Vassily V. Parin, secretary general of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR and professor of physiology at the Third Moscow Medical Institute. Dr. Parin is visiting here at the invitation of Surgeon General Thomas Parran, U.S. Public Health Service.

Erythrin is the name of the new antibiotic. It is the first such substance extracted from higher animals. Penicillin comes from a mold and the famous KR anti-cancer vaccine under trial in Russia comes from a protozoa, but this form of animal life is very low in the animal kingdom.

The new antibiotic from rabbit blood cells was discovered by Dr. L. A. Silber of Moscow. It is very effective against

different kinds of disease germs and particularly against the germs of diphtheria.

Diphtheria patients and healthy carriers of diphtheria germs are at present being treated with erythrin. The antibiotic gets its name from the medical name for red blood cells, erythrocytes. Red cells from other common laboratory animals, such as guinea pigs and white rats, also are sources of the substance but Dr. Silber has found the erythrin from rabbits the most effective.

A whole new branch of the science of antibiotics may be opening as a result of this discovery, Dr. Parin stated.

The KR vaccine, he emphasized, cannot be recommended for use on cancer patients yet except those treated under the personal supervision of Dr. Nina Klueva, who with her husband, Dr. Gregory Roskin, developed it from trypanosomes, germs that cause Chagas disease. Some but not all of the few breast and skin cancer patients treated have recovered clinically. Not unless and until they have remained free of cancer for

five years, however, will doctors in Russia or elsewhere be satisfied that the vaccine is a cure for cancer. So far, it is only a few months since these patients have been treated. No patients with internal cancers have yet been helped by the vaccine.

Science News Letter, November 9, 1946

The first wire suspension bridge in America was built 140 years ago across the Schuylkill river near Philadelphia.

Solutions containing 5% rotenone will destroy over 90% of the cattle grubs and all of the lice on the animals treated.

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