

and his exposure to lead. It was only after he received injections of BAL that the diagnosis of lead poisoning was confirmed, since the drug increased the discharge of lead from the points of concentration in the body.

This action of BAL's is an aid to diagnosis, since the amount of lead ex-

creted can be measured by laboratory methods and thus confirms what is only suspected on the basis of a physical examination.

Two weeks after the first injections of BAL the patient again received the drug. Treatment lasted for five days, after which he was well and was dismissed.

*Science News Letter, December 6, 1947*

#### MEDICINE

## Lessen Appendix Hazard

**A striking reduction in deaths from ruptured appendix has resulted from improvements in caring for patients but delays in seeking treatment are still killing many.**

► IMPROVEMENTS in caring for patients operated on for ruptured appendix have brought a striking reduction in deaths, but delay in calling a doctor and going to the hospital is still killing many, Drs. Edward S. Stafford and H. William Scott of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Hospital told members of the Southern Medical Association meeting in Baltimore.

Twenty years ago, patients operated on at Johns Hopkins for appendicitis with perforation, or rupture, of the appendix, died at the rate of 18.8%. Today the death rate for this condition is 7%.

Four factors are chiefly responsible for this saving in lives, the surgeons stated. In order of importance these are:

First, injection of fluids and salts into the patient's veins; second, decompression of the stomach and intestinal tract by the Miller-Abbott tube or other suction apparatus; third, improved recognition and treatment of the complications of ruptured appendix; and fourth, treatment with sulfa drugs and penicillin.

More lives might be saved, the sur-

geons suggest, by use of anti-blood clotting chemicals or tying off a vein in the leg to prevent pulmonary embolism or, as it sometimes popularly called, a clot in the lungs. This condition caused seven of 26 deaths in patients with abscess around the appendix at the time of operation. Most of these patients who developed pulmonary embolism were over 50 years of age.

No improvement in dealing with the problem of appendicitis has been made by the lay public or by the physicians consulted by patients before coming to the hospital, the surgeons pointed out. The number of patients who delay going to the hospital and, therefore, the number with ruptured appendix has not changed during the period surveyed. Twelve of the 23 patients who died of ruptured appendix in the period 1939-1947 had been seen by a physician more than 24 hours before going to the hospital.

In contrast to the 7% death rate from appendicitis with rupture, there were only two deaths in over 1,400 consecutive operations for simple acute appendicitis without rupture.

*Science News Letter, December 6, 1947*

#### PHYSICS

## Study Cosmic Rays in Alps

► THE high-altitude laboratory at Pianrosa, near Cervinia in the Italian province of Aosta, may become an international center for European scientists studying cosmic rays. This was suggested at a recent conference on cosmic rays held in Cracow, Poland, under the auspices of UNESCO.

This laboratory, which was prefabricated and transported to a site nearly

two miles high, includes both a large laboratory, 20 by 30 feet, and living accommodations for four persons. A cable railway connects it with a guest house 3,000 feet below. Food and materials are procured at the lower station and eight more persons can stay at the guest house. The unique laboratory is open all the year.

Director of the cosmic ray center is

a young Italian scientist, Gilberto Bernardini, who will be a visiting professor at Columbia University in New York during the first six months of 1948. During his absence, Prof. E. Amaldi, director of the Nuclear Physics Center in Rome, and Dr. Ettore Pancini will be in charge.

Like American scientists studying cosmic rays, the Italians at their mountain laboratory are seeking to solve the mysteries of the meson, also called mesotron, a high-powered, short-lived particle found only in cosmic rays.

Prof. Bernardini said that he would welcome research workers from any country and that they would find a very congenial atmosphere—in spite of the many limitations which present conditions in Italy impose.

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