

PHARMACOLOGY

New Poison Antidotes

There is a possibility that the new hayfever medicines, such as benadryl, pyribenzamine and others may act as antidotes to curare and certain other poisons.

► THE possibility that the new hayfever medicines, benadryl, pyribenzamine, neo-antergan and others, may act as antidotes to certain poisons was suggested by the French scientist who discovered the mother substances of these modern hayfever medicines.

He is Dr. Daniel Bovet, now at the Instituto Superiore di Sanita in Rome, but for about 20 years the only pharmacologist at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. While there he not only discovered the first of the anti-histamine chemicals which relieve hayfever and hives, but with Drs. E. Trefonel and F. Mitti discovered that sulfanilamide is the active part of the original German prontosil. The whole development of the sulfa drugs is based on this discovery.

The South American Indian arrow poison, curare, and certain other poisons and some purgatives, he reported, appear to act in the body by liberating histamine. The new hayfever drugs are noticeably antagonistic to the action of these poisons as well as to histamine. Study of the poisons mentioned, he pointed out, has opened up an interesting and so far little explored field.

Relative newcomers to the hayfever drugs of the anti-histamine class are thephorin, described by Dr. C. Lehman of Hoffman-La Roche, Inc., at Nutley, N. J.; antistine, reported by Dr. Rolf Meier of Ciba, Ltd., and the University of Basle, Switzerland; thenylene or histadyl; nepera and rhone poulenc.

All of these and the more familiar benadryl, pyribenzamine and neoantergan have about the same pattern of action, Dr. Samuel M. Feinberg of Northwestern University Medical School stated.

All, with one exception, are local anesthetics. All show their greatest effect on hives and other forms of itching skin. They are about equally effective in relieving the sneezing and other symptoms of hayfever, including the kind that may come at non-hayfever seasons. None of them is very effective in asthma.

All have about the same undesirable effects, including that of causing sleepiness with lassitude, weakness and inability to concentrate. Dizziness and

nervousness are other common undesirable effects.

Curiously, these drugs not only vary somewhat between themselves in their effects, but they also vary in the response of the patient. That is, one with the highest sleepiness effect in general may cause less sleepiness in some individuals.

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MICROSCOPY

New Lens Magnifies Virus 200,000 Times Actual Size

► VIRUSES no longer are protected by their infinitesimal size because a new "double lens" has been experimentally developed for use with the electron microscope, which provides an extraordinary degree of light contrast and detail at magnification from 200,000 to 300,000 times actual size.

The importance of this new experimental lens not only in the study of virus infections but in enzyme action and even cancer, was reported jointly by Dr. James Hillier and S. G. Ellis, of the RCA Laboratories, Princeton, N. J., at the first international conference of the Electron Microscope Society of America, at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.

In addition to the high magnification viewer, a deflection focusing system was also developed. Its simplicity was emphasized by the scientists by comparing it to a range-finder on a conventional camera. The electron microscope specimen is alternately illuminated from two directions giving two images if it is out of focus. Even an inexperienced operator can obtain a clear image by adjusting the focusing control until the two images are accurately super-imposed.

A leak detector for vacuum equipment was demonstrated for the first time by Herbert Nelson of the RCA Victor Division, Harrison, N. J., before the same meeting. It is portable and sniffs out leaks so small that molecules of air have trouble squeezing through in such devices as the electron microscope, electron tubes, X-ray tubes, cyclotrons and vacuum stills.

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