

MEDICINE

Drug Aid for Pneumonia

Aureomycin may succeed in checking virus pneumonia where the antibiotics and sulfa drugs have failed, it appears from preliminary trials.

➤ **CHEMICAL** conquest of virus pneumonia which has defied other remedies from sulfa drugs to penicillin and streptomycin, may come from one of the newest of mold-fungus class of drugs, aureomycin.

Success in treatment of 13 consecutive virus pneumonia patients with this golden yellow drug was reported by Drs. Emanuel B. Schoenbach and Morton S. Bryer of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine at the meeting of the eastern section of the American Federation for Clinical Research in Philadelphia.

"The response to treatment was dramatic," the doctors stated.

The patients, ranging in age from 10 to 59 years, were all except one severely, though not gravely, ill. All were in the hospital. In nine, the temperature had been 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher before the aureomycin treatment. Ten of the patients had gotten sulfadiazine or penicillin or both without any apparent improvement.

Back to Normal

Within 24 hours after aureomycin treatment was started, the temperature was back to normal in nine of the patients. In another three patients the temperature was down to normal within 24 to 48 hours. In one extremely ill patient, who had turned blue and had four lobes of his lungs involved, it took 72 hours for the temperature to go to normal, although the patient responded excellently to the treatment. The nine who lost their fever within the first 24 hours of treatment did not get the new drug until they had been sick from two to 21 days.

No sign of drug toxicity appeared in these patients nor in over 80 with other fevers who were treated with aureomycin.

The results with the virus pneumonia patients "would indicate," the doctors stated in the usual conservative scientific wording, "that this drug is an effective chemotherapeutic agent for primary atypical non-bacterial (viral) pneumonia."

Virus pneumonia, as it is commonly called, has been reported with increasing frequency during the past 15 years. The increase started just about the time the sulfa drugs appeared on the scene to cure the formerly much dreaded pneumococcal pneumonia.

Not Often Fatal

Though virus pneumonia is not often fatal, it may be quite disabling and persist for many weeks. It starts gradually with a non-productive cough, headache and sick feeling. Diagnosis is based on these symptoms and on X-ray evidence of lung consolidation, a low to normal white blood count, bacteriological and other blood tests that rule out other similar diseases and the fact that even massive doses of sulfadiazine and penicillin do not affect it.

Aureomycin was discovered by Dr. B. M. Duggar of the Lederle Laboratories division of the American Cyanamid Company. First announcements of its disease-curing ability were made at a New York Academy of Sciences conference last July (See SNL, July 31). It comes from a kind of fungus and is related to streptomycin.

Besides the virus pneumonia patients, the Johns Hopkins doctors report they have used it thus far in 13 cases of Rocky

Mountain spotted fever, five cases of undulant fever (all with positive blood cultures), one case of recrudescing epidemic typhus fever, several cases of hemolytic *Staphylococcus aureus* sepsis which the layman calls blood poisoning, two cases of peritonitis and two cases of purulent pneumococcal and streptococcal meningitis, "among many others." In all cases the drug has proved an effective remedy, bringing "prompt remission of the disease."

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Some of the *synthetic rubbers* used for insulating underground electric cable appear to be more resistant to destructive organisms in the soil than natural rubber.

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