

MEDICINE

Vitamin B₁₂ Aids Anemics

Striking improvement has been noted in patients with several types of anemia following injection of the vitamin.

➤ VITAMIN B₁₂ is "the most effective antianemic substance known," an eight-man medical team reports in the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* (Feb. 19).

The eight men are: Dr. Tom D. Spies, Birmingham, Ala.; Dr. Ramon M. Suarez, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Dr. Guillermo Garcia Lopez and Dr. Fernando Milanes, Havana, Cuba; Dr. Robert E. Stone, Birmingham, Ala.; Dr. Ruben Lopez Toca and Dr. Thomas Aramburu, Havana, Cuba; and Dr. Sam Kartus, Birmingham, Ala.

Their verdict is based on experiences with a group of 35 patients. Some of these had sprue, others a form of anemia termed nutritional macrocytic anemia, and the rest had pernicious anemia. Fourteen of the pernicious anemia patients had the severe form of the disease in which the spinal cord is affected.

In each case, striking improvement followed injection of the vitamin. Between the third and the fifth day the patients said they felt stronger and that their appetites had returned. Laboratory tests showed that new red blood cells were being

formed and their blood was getting less and less anemic.

The pain, stiffness, tingling and numbness of pernicious anemia patients with spinal cord degeneration got better during the first 10 days after injection of the vitamin. Within two weeks a dramatic improvement was seen. One woman had been unable to arise from a sitting position and to walk without help. She had great difficulty using a knife and fork, buttoning her clothes, combing her hair and picking up and handling small objects. On the fourth day of treatment she was able to walk without support and could feel with her fingers differences in textures. Her case is reported as typical of the results of the vitamin treatment.

This vitamin is less than a year old. Its isolation in crystalline form was first announced in April, 1948, by a group of researchers at Merck and Co. (*See SNL*, April 24, 1948). Dr. Spies and associates state that it is the only pure chemical known to be effective in relieving the nerve disorder, subacute combined degeneration, in patients with pernicious anemia.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Pact Changes Call Signs

➤ CHANGES in the radio station call signs in the nonbroadcast services, by which stations identify themselves on the air, are being made to comply with agreements resulting from the International Telecommunication and Radio Conference held in 1947, the Federal Communications Commission has revealed.

Under this agreement, the alphabet is apportioned among the nations for such use. The first letter identifies the nationality of the station. The United States is allotted four initial or key letters, N, K, and W exclusively, and partial use of A. Calls beginning with N are reserved for the Navy and Coast Guard; while the other three letters are used both by government and private stations.

The assignment of radio station calls within the continental United States, Alaska and other possessions, is a function of the U. S. Federal Communications Commission. The general assignment pattern for the principal classes of stations follows.

Coast stations use three letters, from KAA or WAA through KZZ or WZZ.

Aeronautical stations use three letters and a digit, such as KAA2.

Fixed coastal telephone in Alaska, three letters and two digits, such as KAA20.

Other land stations, three letters and three digits, KAA200, for example.

Mobile telegraph, other than ship and aircraft, four letters and one digit.

Similar mobile telephone, two letters and four digits.

There are ten other classes of stations. Included are lifeboats and liferafts. Their call is the call sign of their parent ship or aircraft plus two digits from 20 to 99 inclusive. Amateur stations have a call sign of one letter, one digit, and two letters, such as K5AA or sometimes two letters before the digit, and two or three after it.

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MEDICINE

More Penicillin Planned At World Health Meeting

➤ MORE penicillin for the anti-syphilis drives now being waged in five European countries and for Europeans sick with pneumonia or other penicillin-curable illness

may be available as a result of a conference of penicillin production experts held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The conference was held under World Health Organization auspices. Its object was to learn how to start up penicillin production in former UNRRA plants now standing idle in several European countries. Specialists in penicillin production were asked to attend from England and Denmark and representatives were invited from Byelorussia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukraine and Yugoslavia as well as technical experts from the countries where the UNRRA plants are located.

Overcoming the widespread shortages of all types of medical supplies in many of the war devastated areas is one of the first tasks facing the WHO Special Office for Europe which has just been set up in Geneva with Dr. Norman D. Begg as acting director. The penicillin production conference was called to help solve some of the shortage problems.

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MEDICINE

World Code Against Making Doctors P.O.W.'s Is Asked

➤ AN international medical code which, among other things, would prevent making prisoners of doctors in time of war and would guarantee them "complete professional freedom" is urged by the International Committee of Military Medicine.

The committee's stand is reported to American physicians by Dr. Jules Voncken of Liege, Belgium, in the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* (Feb. 19).

The lessons of the Nuremberg trials should not be forgotten, he points out. The coming diplomatic conference in Geneva this spring "should not be permitted to end before it has established an international code of medicine."

The World Health Organization and the World Medical Organization, Dr. Voncken states, "should take a stand as soon as possible on this problem which affects the future of all medicine."

The code proposed by the committee is as follows:

1. The physician must render the same aid to his friend or to his enemy.

2. In no case should the physician be disturbed at having given aid to a wounded person whatever the nationality, race, religion or opinion of the injured, and whatever may be the circumstances in which the wounded is found.

3. The physician can never in any manner cooperate in works of general or individual destruction.

4. As a result, this set of duties confers on the physician a legal status, according to which he cannot be made a prisoner and according to which he must be granted in all times, and in all places, the right of his complete professional freedom.

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