

MEDICINE

Test for Liver Disease

Skin test for and vaccine protection against infectious hepatitis threatening troops in Korea are perfected. Mumps vaccine reported.

► PROTECTION against a disease threatening our troops in Korea and a skin test for it were announced at the meeting of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City, N. J. The disease is infectious hepatitis.

A vaccine against mumps was also reported.

Infectious hepatitis is a liver disease known to the layman as jaundice because the yellow skin color is one of its symptoms. It exists all the time in Japan and the attack rate among our troops has been 35 per thousand.

The virus causing this disease has been isolated by Dr. Werner Henle and associates of the University of Pennsylvania.

At the meeting Drs. M. Michael Sigel and Klaus Hummeler of his staff reported that this virus, when inactivated by ultraviolet light, can be used as a skin test for the disease.

This same material used in the skin test seems to protect against the disease, they reported. The skin test material is not on the market yet, but the disease can be prevented also by gamma globulin from blood. This is the same kind of blood substance widely used to protect against or reduce the severity of measles. In infectious hepatitis, as in measles, the earlier the

globulin is given after exposure to the disease, the more effective it is.

Another kind of jaundice sickness, called serum hepatitis, is prevalent in Germany and was a big problem to the armed forces during World War II. This disease is caused by a different virus. The University of Pennsylvania group has also isolated this virus. A vaccine to protect against mumps was reported by Dr. Henle and his wife, Dr. Gertrude Henle. This vaccine is now on the market. It is made from killed mumps virus, which is also used to test for mumps.

The test and the vaccine are intended chiefly for grown-ups, the Henles stressed. This is because the protection from the vaccine lasts only two to three months. It is better, they advise, to let the children get mumps while they are children when the disease is less severe and is not complicated by infection of the reproductive glands. Parents of a child who gets mumps, they suggest, can be given skin tests. If it is positive, meaning they are susceptible to mumps, they can be given the vaccine which will protect them against the exposure from their child.

Drs. Henle find four out of ten persons get mumps without showing any signs of the disease.

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MEDICINE

Preparedness Lack Scored

► THE LACK of medical preparedness for handling mass casualties in case our cities are bombed was sharply criticized in a report by Capt. E. R. Hering of the Navy Medical Corps presented to the American Medical Association meeting in Atlantic City N. J.

"It seems to me, lately back from Korea, that we are sitting on dynamite," he declared.

"I have been amazed at the lackadaisical attitude exhibited by our civilian medical people regarding their responsibilities in the event of total war. One of the cruelest aspects of the action in Korea has been the plight of the wounded civilians," he stated.

"Medical care was non-existent other than the time and facilities we of the military could afford them. This must not happen here, but I see little evidence that specific concrete steps have been taken to

cope with the problem of civilian care in the event of total war."

The action in Korea, which Capt. Hering termed "a weird business," has, he said, "put the spotlight directly on our greatest weakness, the lack of medical officers who are psychologically prepared, physically toughened, professionally capable and sufficiently aware of the military aspects of any given campaign to adapt themselves and the function of their unit to the military situation of the moment."

Science News Letter, June 23, 1951

ENGINEERING

Urge All Students Be Taught How to Drive

► MORE THAN one-third of the nearly 1,750,000 eligible high school students in the country are enrolled in some type of

course in how to drive an automobile. Safety education experts who attended the President's Highway Safety Conference want to make it compulsory for all of them.

Experience has shown that, on the average, accidents are decreased by half as a result of driver training courses. With this background, the safety educators urge not only extension of driver education courses to all pupils, but also a public relations program to bring this about.

Courses now in existence range from the very elaborate down to a few hours of classroom talks. In Detroit, three schools have their own driver training lots with intersections, traffic lights, stop signals, backing areas and even a small hill. Here, students can "solo" much faster, without the danger of training on public streets.

New York University has developed films of some 30 emergency driving situations which are connected to the mock-up of an automobile. Students can be trained in the proper reactions to tire blowouts and other unexpected situations.

Some automobile manufacturers have adopted programs of aid to schools for driver education. Dealers are urged to lend automobiles to schools. Use of automobiles in the schools has increased to a total of 5,500 cars as compared with 4,500 a year ago.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Search for Remains of Prehistoric First Americans

► SEARCHING FOR remains of the first Americans who may have arrived in prehistoric times on Alaska's northern shores coming from Siberia, four Harvard anthropologists will excavate this summer the permanently frozen soil of our northern waste lands.

Bones of the ancestors of the American Indians have not been found on the shortest route across the Bering Sea. The search by the Peabody Museum scientists is being extended farther north for that reason.

The habits, tools and technology of modern Eskimos will be studied to compare them with objects unearthed in the excavations.

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INVENTION

Patent Method for Etching Aluminum

► A METHOD of etching aluminum and aluminum alloys for decoration purposes and photomechanical printing earned for Charles Edmund Meulendyke, Rochester, N. Y., patent 2,556,626. The chemical used is a solution containing cupric chloride, glycerine and orthophosphoric acid.

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