

MEDICINE

New Poison Ivy Remedy

Zirconium used in a vanishing cream type of ointment stopped itching and burning for 39 out of 47 patients. It combines with other substances to neutralize them.

► A NEW and speedy remedy for poison ivy has been found in zirconium, metal used to build atom bomb furnaces among other industrial uses.

The zirconium is used in a vanishing cream type of ointment. When tried on 47 patients, the itching and burning stopped and the rash began to get better with blisters drying up within 24 hours in 39 patients.

These good results are reported by Drs. G. Arnold Cronk and Dorothy E. Naumann of the Student Health Service at Syracuse University. (JOURNAL OF LABORATORY AND CLINICAL MEDICINE, June).

There is some suggestion that the ointment might even be a preventive. Before it was used on patients, it was tried on two volunteers, a girl and a woman who had previously had several attacks of poison ivy. A poison ivy extract was dropped on three places on the forearm of each volun-

teer. As soon as this had dried, the zirconium ointment was put on one of the three places while the other two on each arm were left untreated. Typical bumps and blisters appeared on the untreated spots but none on the treated ones.

The idea for using zirconium came from Dr. E. Wainger of the Titanium Alloy Corporation. He knew that the metal can combine with other substances in a way that makes possible their neutralization as poisons. This property makes it a potential antidote for plutonium poisoning. He found that when he added zirconium salts to urishiol, the poison of poison ivy, an inactive precipitate was formed. Fluid filtered from this did not cause ivy poisoning symptoms when tested on susceptible volunteers.

So far as is known, zirconium itself is not poisonous. The patients treated by the

Syracuse doctors did not show any signs of poisoning or harm from the zirconium.

The zirconium ointment is made from zirconium oxide, stearic acid, potassium hydroxide, glycerine, water and carbon dioxide.

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PLANT PATHOLOGY

Two New Chemicals May Protect Apples and Peaches

► TWO NEW chemicals now being orchard-tested in Beltsville, Md., show promise of controlling some of the diseases that attack and spoil apples and peaches.

The two compounds are so new that U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists do not yet know whether they are harmful to man or animals. If present, small-scale orchard tests prove the compounds as successful as expected, their effects on man and other warm-blooded creatures will then be investigated.

Some of the diseases controlled by the two chemicals, 2,2'-thiobis(4-chlorophenol) and bis(p-nitrophenyl) ester of carbonic acid, include: apple scab, Brooks' spot, bitter rot and sooty blotch on apples; and peach scab, brown rot and bacterial spot on peaches.

Studies to find some way of predicting what compounds will make good insect killers and disease controllers brought to light the two chemicals, as well as three other promising ones available only in very limited amounts. Exactly 412 synthetic organic chemicals have been tested in the last three years, Drs. M. C. Goldsworthy, senior pathologist at the Department of Agriculture's Plant Industry Station, and S. I. Gertler, chemist with the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, report.

Science News Letter, August 25, 1951

ANTHROPOLOGY

Ancient Ape-Man Walked Like a Man

► AN ANCIENT creature with the face and brain of an ape walked like a man. He is Washington's latest VIP.

He is represented at the Smithsonian Institution by the exact casts of a few fragments of his bones which have been preserved as fossils in the limestone of South Africa for from 750,000 to 2,000,000 years.

The original ancient bones of this ape-man were found by Dr. Raymond A. Dart, of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in ancient caves at Makapans in the Central Transvaal.

The South African Ape-man may have been intelligent enough to use fire to cook his dinner. This was indicated by fire-charred bones found near the site where some of the bones were located and believed to be of the same antiquity. Dr.



APE-MAN SKULL—Dr. M. T. Newman, anthropologist of the Smithsonian Institution, points to the prominent cheek bones, ape characteristic of this very ancient skull. The skull cast, recently received, is a restoration made by Dr. Raymond A. Dart, of South Africa, on the basis of fossil bone fragments he found in the Transvaal. The cheek bones, eyebrow ridges and prominent upper jaw mark the animal as an ape, yet the way the skull was balanced, the pelvis, and leg bones show that it walked erect like a man. At the left is shown a skull of modern man for comparison.