MEDICINE

Virus Atypical Pneumonia

Diagnosis of such a disease is "meaningless," two Liverpool doctors report. Believe disease is "segmental aspiration pneumonia."

➤ THE NAME and diagnosis "primary atypical pneumonia," or virus pneumonia, which countless patients in recent years have been told they had, is attacked as "meaningless" and "not a specific condition" in a report by two Liverpool physicians to the British Medical Journal (Oct. 27).

The physicians are Dr. Philip W. Robertson, who is squadron leader and medical specialist of the R.A.F., as well as clinical assistant at the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool, and Dr. K. D. Forgan Morle, consultant radiologist to the Liverpool Regional Hospital Board and research assistant in the department of radiology, University of Liverpool.

These doctors believe that the condition many physicians have diagnosed as primary atypical pneumonia is "segmental aspiration pneumonia." It is caused, they believe, by aspiration, or breathing, into the lungs of mucus and pus from the nose and throat during colds and similar infections of the upper breathing tract. These secretions, they believe, cause trouble in segments or subsegments of the lungs and bronchi, so they use the word "segmental" in the new name they propose for the condition.

This kind of pneumonia, they point out, got the name "virus pneumonia" because no germ of bacillus size could be identified as its cause, yet it seemed to be an infection, or germ-caused ailment. So doctors decided it was due to an unidentified small sized virus. Since the virus has never been found, the Liverpool doctors think it wrong to attribute the illness to a virus.

Comparison of symptoms and physical findings, including X-ray pictures in reported cases of primary atypical or virus pneumonia and in over 500 cases the Liverpool doctors call segmental aspiration pneumonia, shows "no significant difference between them."

Further evidence for their view that the disease is mechanically caused by aspiration of material into the lungs, rather than by a virus, is, they believe, the fact that modern germ-fighting drugs, from sulfa drugs to chloromycetin and aureomycin, sometimes help and sometimes do not help the patient. These drugs could only help if there were a germ or virus present which was sensitive to the drug's action. In some cases such germs may be present as a complication of the original condition, and then the drugs might help.

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***PYLONS, NOT WARSHIPS**—These devices, known as pylons, are part of the underbelly of F-84 Thunderjets, suspended beneath each wing. They carry auxiliary fuel tanks or armament such as bombs, rockets or napalm tanks and have an electrical or air control system that permits jettisoning such equipment or, if needed, the pylon itself.*

PUBLIC HEALTH

Freeze Dry Factory Wastes To Stop River Pollution

➤ FREEZE DRYING methods which now give us vitamin-C-rich fruit juices for breakfast and blood plasma stockpiles for treatment of shock in injuries, may provide the "real solution" to pollution of lakes and streams with factory wastes, now a serious problem.

Experiments are now under way to produce equipment which will do this job effectively and economically, George D. Armerding, of Mojonnier Bros Co., Oakland, Calif., reported at the meeting of the American Public Health Association in San Francisco.

Low temperature evaporation equipment, he said, is also used in production of insulin for diabetics and of antibiotics, such as penicillin, for fighting germ diseases. Reduction in the cost of these medicines and production in sufficient volume to meet medical demands has been made possible through use of low temperature equipment.

Science News Letter, November 10, 1951

INVENTION

Device Helps Geologists Detect Underwater Oil

➤ GEOLOGISTS LOOKING for oil sometimes set off a small explosion on or just under the surface of the earth. The waves echoed back from deep inside the ground sometimes tell them whether rock formations below are likely to contain oil.

In looking for oil under the ocean, geologists have been dragging seismic devices, which record the echoed waves, along the bottom of the ocean behind a boat. In this process, cables were fouled, the recording device received a knocking about, and the work was generally hampered.

Now Roy Lee Gallaway, Laurel, Miss., has invented a method for keeping the recording devices suspended above the bottom as they are dragged along by the moving boat. He has assigned his patent 2,572,255 to the Texas Company, New York. He uses a semi-floating cable system which not only does away with the disadvantages of dragging the devices along the bottom, but also permits use of multiple detectors as is done on dry land.

Science News Letter, November 3, 1951