

MEDICINE

New Kind of Leprosarium

Patients lead a life as nearly normal as possible, complete with home and family and pig, at the Santa Isabel Colony in Paraguay.

➤ A NEW kind of leprosarium where patients with this dread disease are given a life as nearly normal as possible, complete with their own home, family and pig, has been described by the director, Dr. Federico Rios. Dr. Rios, Paraguayan specialist in leprosy, is visiting this country under the auspices of the U. S. Institute of Inter-American Affairs.

Leprosy, Dr. Rios explained, is a disease that affects the mind as well as the body. The more intelligent the patient, the more he suffers psychologically. Leprosy, more perhaps than any other disease, makes the patient conscious that others withdraw from him. He gets to feel that all the world is against him and he reacts by having an inferiority complex and becoming antisocial.

When Dr. Rios took over the direction of Paraguay's national hospital for lepers in 1945, it had a terrible reputation as a pest house. Patients would go there only if they were dragged—to what they saw as inevitable and horrible death.

First act of Dr. Rios was to change the name of the hospital. No longer is it a "Leprocomio;" now it is the Santa Isabel Colony. No walls confine the patient; he does not feel himself under any police control. Patients enter the colony on a voluntary basis. They are completely free to roam its broad acres. If the patient's health permits, when he enters he is given a plot of ground on which he can build his own little house. He is free to bring with him his pig and cow, if he has them, and the Paraguayan's constant companion, his horse. Children, if they are also patients, are kept in the home with the parents. If they are well they are placed in a pre-ventorium.

The leper at Santa Isabel is not permitted to feel cut off from the world. Instead, all the aspects of a normal community life are cultivated. The Paraguayan national sport is Rugby football, so there are three football teams in the colony and they play against each other just as in the regular football leagues. National holidays and religious fetes are celebrated in the customary way. Music is provided by orchestras organized among the patients (practically every Paraguayan plays the guitar or native harp), and professional musicians are brought to the colony for special holiday dances. So far as he is able, the patient practices his own vocation; the carpenter builds, the shoemaker mends shoes, the farmer grows food.

Greatest need of the colony is for the services of a psychiatrist, for the leper requires psychological guidance as well as advice on personal problems. This is now furnished by Dr. Rios himself, but that means personally treating 500 patients.

Modern hospital buildings, each housing about 35 patients, have been constructed with the aid of the Institute of Inter-American Affairs.

In the psychologically planned environment and with modern treatment with sulfa drugs, the patients are being cured, and, as the public sees the lepers go out cured, others become willing to enter for treatment.

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CHEMISTRY

Predict About Elements by Studying "Stand-Ins"

➤ HOW MAN-MADE elements such as berkelium and californium will react with other chemicals can be predicted more accurately by using rare earths as "stand-ins."

Only very minute amounts of man-made elements are formed by cyclotron bombard-

ment or by fission chain reaction. But their atomic structure is similar to the rare earths, so scientists are studying these stand-in elements instead.

Drs. Clifford S. Garner and Dale Meier of the University of California at Los Angeles have just completed studies with europium, rarest of the rare earths. Rare earths are so called because, although they are abundantly present in the earth's crust, it is very difficult to separate one from the other. The chemists were studying how doubly charged europium atoms can become triply charged ones and vice versa. Only a few cases are now known of the electron-transfer type of exchange reaction.

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GEOLOGY

Hawaiian Islands Slowly Sinking Into Ocean

➤ SIXTY MILLION years from now the Hawaiian Island Chain will probably be deeply drowned in water, two scientists from the U. S. Navy's Electronics Laboratory in San Diego predicted in Detroit.

Robert S. Dietz and H. W. Menard told members of the Geological Society of America that the islands are slowly sinking and that in the far future they may become deeply submerged, much like thousand-mile-long range mountain chain recently discovered between the Marshall and Hawaiian Islands. They base their conclusions on echo soundings obtained on a recent Navy-Scripps Institution of Oceanography Expedition to the mid-Pacific.

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DREAD DISEASE—This picture shows the repelling feature of leprosy, demonstrating the reason why lepers through the ages have been treated like outcasts.