

MEDICINE

Lasker Health Awards

Dentists, for the first time, receive Lasker Awards for work on fluoridation of water to prevent dental decay. Dr. C.-E. A. Winslow given special award for his untiring efforts.

► CONTRIBUTIONS TO better health through work in fields ranging from sanitation to psychiatry, and including vitamins, viruses, teeth and rehabilitation are recognized in this year's Lasker Awards of the American Public Health Association.

For the first time, dentists get one of these \$1,000 awards plus a gold statuette of the Winged Victory of Samothrace. The dentists are Dr. Frederick S. McKay of Colorado Springs, Colo., who showed the relation between mottled enamel of teeth and a then undetermined substance in drinking water consumed in childhood, and noted the resistance of mottled teeth to decay, and Dr. H. Trendley Dean, director of the National Institute of Dental Research, U. S. Public Health Service, Washington, who, through research and leadership in program planning, developed Dr. McKay's observations into the present widespread program of fluoridation of water supplies to control tooth decay.

Nicotinic acid, the vitamin that cures and prevents pellagra which once was rampant in our southern states and other parts of the world, was first isolated by Dr. Conrad A. Elvehjem, chairman of the biochemistry department, University of Wisconsin. For this and basic research showing the need for copper, zinc and manganese in animal diets, and that the amino acid, tryptophan, is partly interchangeable with nicotinic acid as a nutrient, Dr. Elvehjem receives one of this year's Lasker Awards.

A special award of \$2,500 goes to Dr. Chas.-Edw. Amory Winslow of Yale University. For more than half a century Dr. Winslow has been the inspiration, leader and teacher of a generation of public health workers in what has been called the "sanitary revolution of our time." Much of the health protection and disease prevention public health departments furnish today, and which the average citizen takes for granted, is owing to Dr. Winslow's studies and teachings.

Viruses, causes of diseases such as influenza, colds, poliomyelitis and many others, are today better understood and therefore becoming more vulnerable to man's attack on them through research by another of this year's award winners, Sir Macfarlane Burnet, director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Research, Melbourne, Australia. While much of Dr. Burnet's work is known only to fellow scientists, many lay persons know "Q" fever. The cause of this disease was one of Dr. Burnet's discoveries.

If there has been less of war's usual aftermath in sickness, crippling physical disabilities, and emotional warping leading to

disunity after World War II, it is due in part to the efforts of two other of this year's Lasker Award winners, Dr. Brock Chisholm of Toronto, Canada, director general of the World Health Organization, and Dr. Howard A. Rusk, director of the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of New York University-Bellevue Medical Center, New York.

Dr. Chisholm, a practising psychiatrist before the war, is now using psychiatry and public health in a world-wide effort to achieve everywhere the healthy minds in healthy bodies that will help toward lasting peace.

With the Air Force during World War II, Dr. Rusk developed methods for returning disabled airmen to combat and to useful futures. Since the war he has been a leader in applying these methods to rehabilitation of millions of disabled civilians while his pioneer teaching continues to be applied to our war wounded.

The Lasker Awards have been made annually since 1946. They are given to acknowledge research or other contributions in the fight against those diseases that are the main causes of death and disability, and

for distinguished service in the field of public health administration.

Thirty-four scientists and public health leaders and 13 medical groups have previously received awards.

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SURGERY

Fingers Reconstructed From Palm of Hand

► IF YOU should be unlucky enough to lose all the fingers on both your hands, surgeons can cut new ones for you in the palms of your hands.

Success with this surgery in one patient was reported by Dr. William H. Frackelton of Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis., at the meeting of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in New York.

The patient, Marion Cody, 42-year-old engineer of Milwaukee, had to have all ten digits cut off after they had become frost-bitten while on an Alaskan hunting trip. In two operations on each hand, clefts between the finger stumps were cut deep into the palms and lined with skin grafts, Dr. Frackelton reported. Tendons were transferred to give added mobility to the new fingers.

Vocational training helped Mr. Cody learn to use his new fingers so well that eight months after the first operation he got a job with a local steel company, though before the operation he could not even feed or dress himself.

Science News Letter, October 11, 1952



DECAY PREVENTION—Dr. Frederick S. McKay, co-winner with Dr. H. Trendley Dean of the U. S. Public Health Service of the first Lasker Awards to go to dentists, examines the teeth of a small neighbor in Colorado Springs, Colo.