

of X-rays. The rabbit experiment was reported to the American Physiological Society meeting in Chicago by Drs. H. G. Kupfer, John B. Parker and Rolin Meador of the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond.

Cause of the tendency to bleed is interference by radiation with the blood clotting mechanism. One injection of 45 milligrams of protamine sulfate 48 hours after the rabbits were irradiated prevented this interference with the blood clotting mechanism. When the compound was injected before the X-rays were directed at the rabbits, alteration of the blood clotting mechanism was reduced markedly, but not altogether eliminated, the scientists reported.

Irradiation seems to prevent the formation of infection-killing antibodies in the blood of humans as well as animals, the experimenters said. Again protamine sulfate comes to the rescue in irradiated rabbits. Red blood cells of sheep were injected in the irradiated rabbits. With protamine sulfate injected 48 hours after irradiation, the rabbits were able to produce antibodies to fight the foreign material at a rate significantly higher than that of a control group of rabbits. Protamine sulfate injected before irradiation does not do as good a job on antibody production.

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#### PUBLIC HEALTH

### Poor Sanitation Aids In Immunity to Polio

► THE POOR sanitation and hygiene standards of many countries probably help keep down the rate of badly paralyzing infantile paralysis.

This seeming paradox was discovered when large numbers of Philippine monkeys were fed small daily doses of poliomyelitis virus. More than 50% of them, after having been fed small doses for 90 days, developed the non-paralyzing mild form of infantile paralysis. The rest proved to be markedly resistant to paralysis after swallowing large doses of virus.

However, a control group that did not receive the small doses for the 90-day period was different. When they were fed a large dose of virus, 62% of them developed paralysis.

"These results indicate," Drs. Albert B. Sabin and John Winsler of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine told the American Association of Immunologists meeting in Chicago, "at least one of the ways in which populations with low standards of sanitation and hygiene may acquire a high degree of immunity to poliomyelitis at a relatively low cost in paralysis."

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If a human family ate its food in proportion to a family of birds, the daily grocery list would include 50 loaves of bread, 25 pounds of hamburger, 30 doughnuts, 10 pounds of spinach, 6 heads of lettuce and a gallon of ice cream.

#### MEDICINE

## Drug Halts Blood Cancer

► A DRUG that halts the blood cancer, leukemia, at least temporarily, was announced at the meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in Chicago.

The drug is a new chemical called 6-mercaptopurine. It is given by mouth in tablet form, like an aspirin tablet.

It was synthesized by Drs. George H. Hitchings and Gertrude B. Elion of the Wellcome Research Laboratories, Tuckahoe, N.Y., and tested for anti-leukemia activity by Drs. Joseph H. Burchenal, David A. Karnofsky, M. Lois Murphy, Rose-Ruth Ellison and C. P. Rhoads of Memorial Center for Cancer and Allied Diseases, New York.

More than 100 patients have so far been given the new drug. Of 45 children with acute leukemia, 14 showed temporary disappearance of the disease for one to six months. Another 11 were substantially im-

proved although the disease could still be detected by laboratory methods. Of these 25 children, 11 had previously been treated with one of the antifolic drugs, and had either been resistant to these drugs in the beginning or became so during treatment.

Of 18 adults with acute leukemia, three obtained complete though temporary regression of the disease from the new drug.

The supply of the chemical is limited and for this reason it is being distributed to a small group of clinical investigators by Wellcome Research Laboratories.

The chemical is considered particularly interesting because its mechanism of action is different from that of other agents used in treatment of human cancer. It is thought to damage the cancer cell by interfering directly with its manufacture of nucleic acids, vital components in cell reproduction and function.

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#### MEDICINE

## New Schizophrenia Aid

► A NEW experimental treatment for schizophrenia which may prove to be better than electric shock treatment has been developed.

The treatment uses a chemical cousin of isoniazid, the new TB wonder drug, and flashing lights in the eyes to produce convulsions. A group of psychiatrists and pharmacologists at the University of Illinois College of Medicine tried the treatment on 37 patients, all of whom had been hospitalized for more than two years, one as much as ten years. They had not been helped by previous treatment such as insulin coma, metrazol convulsions or electroshock therapy.

Six of the patients have now been discharged after the new treatment, Dr. Carl C. Pfeiffer, professor of pharmacology at the university, reported to the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics meeting in Chicago.

Fifteen of the patients, including the six discharged, showed remission of the mental disease. Eight of these 15 have had relapses, but all of 37 had some improvement.

A control group of 39 patients received similar treatment except that in place of the drug, semicarbazide, a harmless placebo pill was given. Of these, only two showed any improvement at all.

Now the group is conducting experiments to determine whether this new treatment is better than electroshock, so far the most successful in the therapy of schizophrenia. The treatment lasted four weeks and only eight to ten convulsions were induced in each patient.

A large dose of the chemical makes the

patient susceptible to a convulsion when a light is flashed into his eyes 14 to 20 times. The convulsion comes on slowly and muscular rigidity occurs much more slowly than with electroshock therapy.

The group who did the work with Dr. Pfeiffer consists of Drs. Richard W. Reilly, Marianne W. Gunther, Joseph Tienstra, Mahmood Sajjadi, Paul S. Weiner, Arthur Ellerd, and Theodore Tausig of the university and Manteno State Hospital, Manteno, Ill.

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#### MEDICINE

### Coat Over Ulcers New Protection Method

► PROTECTION AGAINST ulcers—the disease of American civilization—might be achieved by putting a coat over the ulcers. It works in rats and guinea pigs, two scientists reported at the Chicago meeting.

Drs. Mark Nickerson and Charles F. Curry of the department of pharmacology, University of Michigan School of Medicine, said that this kind of protection has been given little attention compared with the attention given other kinds of treatment.

However, they said, feeding a suspension in water of several kinds of siloxanes, put a tough coating over eroded areas of the stomach and duodenal tract.

This afforded almost complete protection against gastric erosion, the scientists said, while control animals died within five days. The ulcers were artificially produced by injecting histamine.

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