

PUBLIC HEALTH

Lasker Health Award

► A GOVERNMENT organization which has dispensed federal funds to aid medical and health research will receive one of the 1953 Lasker Awards at the American Public Health Association meeting in November.

The organization is the division of research grants, National Institutes of Health, Public Health Service, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bethesda, Md.

Ernest Allen, director of the division, will receive the award for his group.

Since its founding in 1945, the division of research grants has made a historic contribution to the support of decentralized medical research in a nationwide network of medical schools, hospitals, universities and independent investigators, the Lasker Foundation commented in announcing the awards.

The division's success is the result of a unique partnership with advisory councils of citizens, physicians and scientists. Its program has delivered concerted, unified attacks on the chief disease killers and cripples of our time, cancer, heart diseases

and mental illnesses, as well as on neglected and nonetheless crucial disease areas. Scientific brains are being subsidized in every part of the country; new answers are prolonging life expectancy for Americans every day. A foundation has been laid for fundamental preventive and curative answers tomorrow.

Research which made possible the fractionation of blood plasma, providing serum albumin for treating shock, gamma globulin for measles and polio, blood clotting substances for surgeons and many other aids to health from human blood, won the second group award for the University Laboratory of Physical Chemistry Related to Medicine and Public Health of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Director of this laboratory until his death early this month (Oct. 1, 1953) was the world famous biochemist, Dr. Edwin J. Cohn.

Individual awards, each of \$1,000, illuminated scrolls and gold statuettes of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, will go to:

Dr. Felix Joel Underwood of Jackson, Miss., for three decades Health Commissioner of his state and responsible for trans-

forming a "backward" state into a national pacesetter in promoting public health.

Dr. Hans Adolf Krebs, University of Sheffield, England, 1953 Nobel (see page 275).

Dr. Michael Heidelberger, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, New York, for contribution leading to new knowledge of immunity to infectious disease.

Dr. George Wald, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., for outstanding achievements in explaining the chemistry of vision.

A posthumous award in public health achievement to Dr. Earle Bernard Phelps (1876-1953), research engineer at the University of Florida, Gainesville, and formerly professor of sanitary science at Columbia University, New York, in recognition of his pioneering and leadership in public health and sanitary science.

Science News Letter, October 31, 1953

SURGERY

Sterilize Instruments By Electric Current

► AN ELECTRIC current passed through boiling water solves the problem of sterilizing delicate instruments for eye operations without corroding their sharp edges.

The method was announced by Dr. Walter Havener of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., at the meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in Chicago.

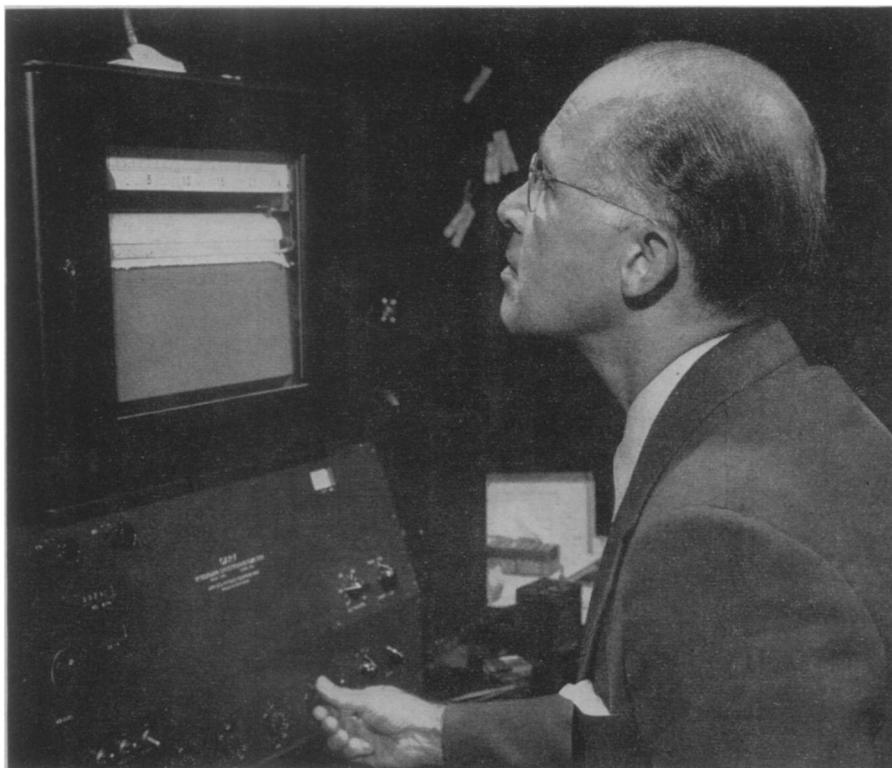
Boiling is recognized as the most effective method of sterilizing instruments, but it has never been possible to boil sharp instruments because only a few minutes in the sterilizer spoils their sharpness, Dr. Havener pointed out. Chemical solutions of many kinds have been used and are fairly satisfactory, but these solutions do not completely destroy bacteria; the organisms may be inactivated, but are capable of reviving and multiplying, he said, when the disinfectant is removed.

Dr. Havener described the method he and Dr. C. A. Siebert, professor of engineering at the university, worked out as follows:

"The instrument is attached to the negative pole of a battery, and a separate piece of metal connected to the positive terminal is immersed in the same solution. The electrical current so oriented causes the surgical instrument to become a cathode and therefore resistant to electrochemical corrosion. Just as a lightning rod is the most effective way of removing electrons from an electrostatically charged cloud, so a sharp edge is the most effective part of the circuit in respect to releasing electrons. As a result of this fortunate circumstance, the sharper an edge is, the greater is the amount of corrosion resistance conferred upon it by this method of cathodic protection."

Science News Letter, October 31, 1953

The thin film of condensed moisture formed on concrete floors of basementless homes may rot or mildew rugs and carpets placed on those floors.



RECEIVES MEDICINE'S "OSCAR"—Dr. George Wald, biologist of Harvard, will receive the Winged Victory gold statuette from the American Public Health Association for "outstanding achievements in explaining the chemistry of vision." It was he who discovered the role of vitamin A in vision and has reproduced in the laboratory all the chemical reactions of the eye in seeing in dim light.