

## MEDICINE

# Sulfa Pill for Diabetics

Some diabetics may be able to swallow pills, drugs still in the research stage, instead of taking insulin injections if tests at many hospitals are successful.

► PILLS for diabetics have now been fashioned from sulfa drug relatives.

For some diabetics, but by no means all, the pills may do away with the need to take injections of insulin.

The pills, however, are not a complete insulin substitute. They do not work unless there is some insulin in the body. Patients whose bodies produce some although not enough insulin may be helped. The drugs seem to act as insulin enhancers.

The drugs are still in the experimental stage. Manufacturers as well as doctors testing them agree on this. None of them is yet on the market commercially or available in drug stores in the United States.

Some medical men stress these new diabetic pills should be given only in hospitals where patients can be watched and tested regularly to be sure they can safely omit their insulin shots.

Tests of the new sulfa pills for diabetics are under way at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School, Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Deaconess Hospital in Boston and other medical research centers both in the United States and abroad.

Elderly diabetics are the ones now considered most likely to be helped by the new pills. Younger patients have been less helped, though a few have been able to take smaller doses of insulin while taking the sulfa pills.

The pills lower the amount of sugar in the blood and the sugar in the urine disappears. The pills are not a cure, even for those in whom they are effective. The patient must go on taking them regularly, but of course swallowing pills every day is much easier than injecting insulin every day.

The blood sugar-lowering effect of the new sulfa drugs was discovered in more or less routine tests of the new compounds. Unlike earlier sulfa drugs, these newer ones have no germ-stopping, or anti-bacterial action.

How the new pills act is not known. The islets of Langerhans in the pancreas produce insulin. Two kinds of cells, alpha and beta, exist in this tissue. According to one theory the sulfa pills stimulate the beta cells to produce insulin. According to another, they act by damaging the alpha cells which produce glucagon. Glucagon raises the level of sugar in the blood. A third theory is that the sulfa pills act by both damaging alpha cells and stimulating formation of new beta cells.

One of the new sulfa pills for diabetes has been given the name Orinase, though it is not yet on the market. Chemically

it is tolylsulfonyl butyleria. It was synthesized at the German laboratories of Farberwerk-Hoechst, Frankfurt-on-the-Main.

French scientists have worked with other sulfa pills for diabetes. First one to be reported in scientific literature has the name of para-amino-benzene-sulfonamido-isopropyl-thiodiazole.

Science News Letter, February 25, 1956

## MEDICINE

## Half of Doctors Agree With Ike

► PRESIDENT EISENHOWER has half the nation's doctors agreeing with him politically, it appears from an American Medical Association survey.

The survey, by an independent research agency (Ben Gaffin and Associates, Chicago) was not primarily a political one. It was made to learn what people like and do not like about doctors so the profession can try to improve its services.

Among those questioned for the survey

were 500 doctors, and among the questions were some on A.M.A. political activities.

In this connection, the A.M.A. report states: "Incidentally 50% of all doctors say that Dwight Eisenhower's political philosophy comes closest to their own, 26% choose Robert Taft's and 17% prefer Franklin Roosevelt's."

Other findings of the survey:

Half the public, 51%, is satisfied with present health insurance plans, while 53% of doctors say the plans are not adequate.

Doctors (82%) are critical of advance press reports of new drugs, while 45% of the public approves, 35% disapproves of such reporting.

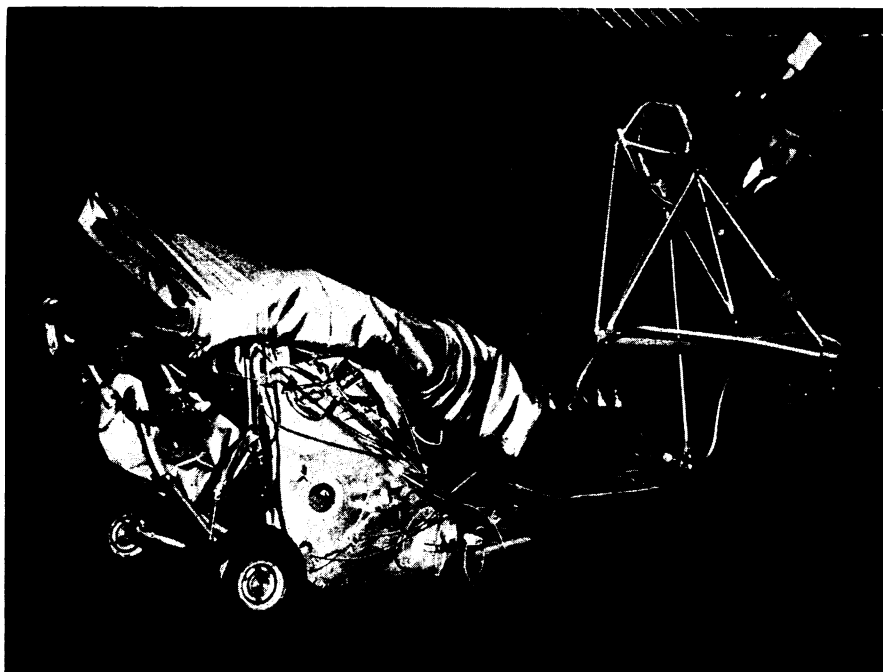
A fourth of the people who know the A.M.A. and half the doctors think a few doctors run the organization.

In spite of much publicity about fee-splitting, about half the public, 54%, admit not knowing what it is. Of those who know exactly or approximately what it is, half say the problem has been exaggerated. With this, four out of five doctors agree.

The public and the doctors agree that hospital and drug bills have risen faster than doctors' bills since World War II. The fact is, comments the A.M.A. report, that hospital bills have been increasing at the sharpest rate of the three.

Labor, material and equipment costs and general inflation are blamed mainly for increased medical costs by both doctors and public.

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**INFLATABLE AIRPLANE**—With wing and tail assemblies folded over the inflated seat section, the remainder of this inflatable airplane, its engine and tubular support, is shouldered by Roger L. Wolcott, an engineer at Goodyear Aircraft Corporation where the craft was developed. The plane, constructed primarily of rubberized fabric, is made rigid with less air pressure than is required to pump up an ordinary car tire.