

PUBLIC HEALTH

Polio No Hazard to Chicago Conventioneers

► DEMOCRATS need not fear polio when they are in Chicago for their convention.

Even though the convention city has been hit by its worst polio epidemic in recent years, convention delegates, members of the press and others attending the convention are unlikely to get the crippling disease.

The reason is that none of them is likely to have family contacts, especially with children, while in Chicago.

Grown-ups, of course, do get polio. The nation's top Democrat for many years, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was a grown-up polio victim whose own suffering led to formation of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and, through it, to the Salk vaccine used to stop Chicago's epidemic.

Those attending this summer's Democratic convention are probably all beyond the 19-year-old age limit for whom vaccine has been available this year.

Their protection during their stay in Chicago will come from: 1. The fact that they may have acquired enough polio virus in the course of their lives to have built up immunity to the disease; 2. The fact that they will not be living with family groups, especially those with children.

It is usually the child in the family that brings the infection into the home where subsequently it may attack both other children and parents and other adults.

Chicago convention visitors need not fear, either, that they will take polio back with them to their own homes and communities, for the same reason. Lack of contact with children in family groups will keep them from getting the virus in their bodies.

Science News Letter, August 11, 1956

PUBLIC HEALTH

Stilbestrol Meat Safe for Consumption

► MEAT from stilbestrol-treated cattle is safe for human consumption, the U. S. Department of Agriculture has announced.

Tests by U. S. Food and Drug Administration scientists contradict claims that such meat is dangerous, the announcement said.

Stilbestrol increases the rate and economy of gain in beef cattle without destroying the meat taste. Some users have feared large deposits of the synthetic female hormone might remain in meat, endangering the health of consumers.

Samples of meat from treated cattle, however, showed no detectable amount of the chemical, even though the cattle had been deliberately given heavier doses of stilbestrol than are permitted in commercial feeding.

Stilbestrol has been used successfully in stimulating growth in pigs as well as cattle, and has aided in treating cancer of the prostate gland and toxemia of pregnancy. The synthetic hormone is used commercially to caponize poultry.

Science News Letter, August 11, 1956



PAIN EXPLAINED—What trouble in the lower back area can cause pain is being explained here by Dr. George S. Hackett of Canton, Ohio, to Dr. C. W. Clark of Nasua, Iowa, when the two doctors attended a meeting of the American Academy of General Practice.

STATISTICS

Olympic Athletic Records

► ATHLETES competing in this year's Olympic track events in Melbourne could better the records in six races, a scientist has calculated.

Dr. M. H. Lietzke of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tenn., figures that possible improvements in running times for the Olympic Games range from seven-tenths of a second for the 200-meter run to 52.7 seconds for the 10,000-meter run.

Considering all world track records, he finds all but three should be lower to be in line with "best efforts." The three exceptions are the 220-yard dash, the one-mile and the one-hour records. To make other present records consistent with times for these, improvements of from two-tenths of a second for 440 yards to 184 seconds for 15 miles are needed.

Dr. Lietzke has omitted the 100-yard and 100-meter races from his calculations "because of the strong effect of the start on these events which causes a considerable deviation from the straightline function." This is the mathematical relationship he has found between distance and the time it takes to cover that distance.

The relationship, he reports in *Science* (July 27), holds not only for running events but for all types of racing, walking, swimming, bicycle racing and horse racing.

Other Olympic records that could be bettered are the 400-meter, four-tenths of a second; the 800-meter, five and a half sec-

onds; the 1,500 meter, six and a tenth seconds; and the 5,000-meter, 38.7 seconds.

Even the present records that represent the "best efforts" so far, Dr. Lietzke emphasizes, are not "ultimates," but will be broken by better training methods, better nutrition, and improved tracks and equipment.

The mathematical relationship he established, however, will be maintained so that at any time it can be shown which records are out of line when compared with the best efforts then, as he has done now.

Science News Letter, August 11, 1956

STATISTICS

21 Million Patients in U. S. Hospitals in 1955

► A RECORD-BREAKING 21,072,521 patients were cared for in hospitals in the United States during 1955, the American Hospital Association has announced.

This was an increase of not quite three-quarters of a million over the previous year.

Total number of babies born in U. S. hospitals in 1955 was 3,476,753.

On any day in 1955, there was an average of 1,363,024 patients and 49,467 newborn infants in U. S. hospitals.

The patients in the nonprofit general hospitals in 1955 paid an average of \$1.75 a day less than it cost to care for them.

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