

MEDICINE

Can Drive Tranquilized

► AT LEAST ONE of the relaxing or tranquilizing drugs can be safely taken by persons driving a motor vehicle or doing other things requiring accuracy, judgment, steadiness and quick eyesight.

Drinking drivers, however, will be just as dangerous whether taking the drug or not.

Tests showing this were reported by Drs. Donald G. Marquis, Ralph W. Gerard, E. Lowell Kelly, James G. Miller and Anatol Rapoport of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, at a conference at the New York Academy of Sciences.

The tranquilizer they tested is meprobamate, sold under the trade names Equanil and Miltown. Although only on the market since April, 1955, some eight million doses are being prescribed every month. One out of every 20 Americans, it is estimated, got the drug within the last 30 days.

Yet the Michigan study is, so far as is known, the only one made of any tranquilizer on its effects on normal persons with relation to the activities of everyday life.

Meprobamate actually is a muscle-relaxing drug. How much effect it has in tranquilizing, or relieving anxiety, is open to question in the opinion of the Michigan researchers.

They compared the effects of this drug, an identical looking capsule of a dummy, or placebo, material, two ounces of whisky, and the drug plus two ounces of whisky. The 50 normal persons tested did not know whether they were getting the drug or the dummy capsule.

One day they got one, one day another, one day whisky alone and another day whisky plus meprobamate.

After each, the normal persons were tested on a driver trainer, with an instrument to test visual acuity, depth perception and

visual balance, and for motor steadiness as shown by how they could hold a metal stylus in a series of holes of decreasing size without touching the sides of the holes with the stylus.

No significant difference was found in skills or performance between tests with meprobamate and tests with the dummy capsule. The whisky definitely made driving performance worse, but alcohol with meprobamate had the same effect as alcohol alone.

Science News Letter, November 3, 1956

Rice wax, now an unused waste product of rice-oil production, can replace imported carnauba and other hard waxes used in polishes, carbon paper, and shoe stains.

Bulgaria became the 75th member state of UNESCO in 1956.

Do You Know?

Whooping cranes are great white birds about five feet tall, with red-crowned heads, black-tipped wings and a wingspread of seven feet.

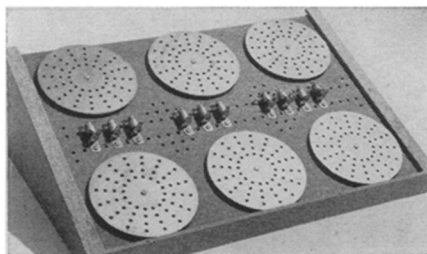
The annual catch of *fish* varies from year to year but approximates 4,500,000,000 pounds.

More money is spent in America for *grass* on lawns, parks, cemeteries, golf courses, etc., than for any other single crop.

Ten different species of disease-carrying *insects* have now developed immunity to insecticides normally used to exterminate them.

A dental expert has developed a new X-ray technique for producing clear *fingerprints* from the charred hands of fire victims.

Can you think faster than this Machine?



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