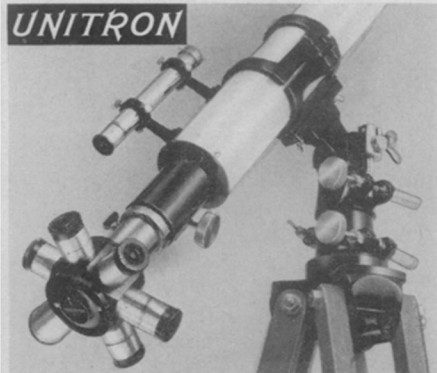


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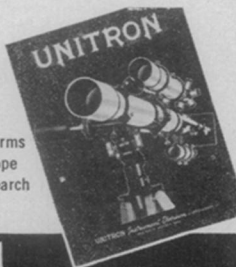
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BIOPHYSICS

# Fight X-Ray Scare

► THE NATION'S RADIOLOGISTS fought back at the public's growing fear of X-rays in a statement released by the American College of Radiology.

The purpose of the statement was to put in "proper perspective" a report issued in June by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council on the harmful effects of radiation. (See SNL, June 23, p. 387.) This report warned that the safest amount of radiation was none at all, and that all medical and dental X-rays should be kept to the bare minimum.

The radiation dosage to healthy people should naturally be kept to a minimum, the radiologists' statement said, but with sick people the proper amount of radiation is entirely another matter. Then it must be up to the trained radiologist to decide how much is necessary for proper treatment.

If the use of medical X-rays is restricted too far, it will lead to poor diagnosis and ineffective treatment.

In further defense of the X-ray, the radiologists claim that a dosage of 10

roentgens, the maximum safe exposure to the reproductive organs according to the National Academy of Sciences' report, is admittedly an arbitrary figure.

Taking the average chest X-ray picture gives a dosage of .06 roentgen, while a dental picture may expose a small area to a dose of 14 roentgens. How much of this total penetrates the reproductive organs is not known.

According to the Academy's findings, the population already receives about 4.3 roentgens from natural radiation background and about 0.1 from fallout over a 30-year period, assuming that weapons testing continues at its present rate.

Attacking specifically a recommendation that all persons should carry "personal exposure" charts as a permanent record of medical X-ray examinations, the radiologists said this was premature, if not impossible. (See SNL, June 23, p. 386.)

The real damage is done by the radiation reaching the gonads and no reliable methods of measuring it are available.

Science News Letter, December 1, 1956

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