

MEDICINE

Wool Hospital Blankets Infected With Bacteria

► THE WOOL hospital blanket is a "bad piece" of equipment and potentially dangerous to patients, Dr. B. R. Frisby, Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, England, reports in the *British Medical Journal* (Aug. 31).

Wool blankets quickly become infected with bacteria and to keep them sterile requires more frequent washing than many hospital laundries can give them.

Ideally, every patient should get clean blankets when he enters the hospital, but this was found to be impossible. As a result, blankets got washed when either a patient using them had died, an obviously infected patient had used them, or when they looked dirty. This last condition usually arose when the blankets had been used for 12 weeks or more.

But even the just-washed blankets were found to have high concentrations of bacteria, including penicillin-resistant ones.

Laundering them in special bactericidal solutions improved the situation but unless the washings could be done after each patient's use, the blankets soon became contaminated.

Because of this, blankets made of terylene instead of wool are being tried at the hospital, Dr. Frisby reports.

They are boiled like sheets, are light and warm, and have stood up to an average of 14 boilings very well. Bacteriological tests have shown them to be relatively free from contamination.

Even with such blankets, however, there must still be facilities to wash them after every patient, Dr. Frisby concludes.

Science News Letter, September 14, 1957

CHEMISTRY

Spray Prevents Fading In Works of Art

► A SOLUTION which can be sprayed on a priceless old painting to protect the colors from fading and also to prevent deterioration of the protective varnish has been developed under a fellowship program of the Mellon Institute, Pittsburgh.

It is the ultraviolet radiation in sunshine or other light that causes the damage to paintings, the Institute scientists observed.

Ordinary window glass, although it eliminates only a portion of the damaging ultraviolet rays, is capable of reducing by half the damage to the varnish on paintings. The new spray contains a substance that absorbs wavelengths greater than those filtered out by window glass. This reduces the tendency of the film of varnish to lose its solubility.

When a varnish loses its solubility through aging, removing it from a painting presents serious difficulties. In the course of the research, the scientists also developed a method of taking samples of varnish off a painting periodically and testing them for deterioration before the damage has become so serious that the varnish cannot be removed.

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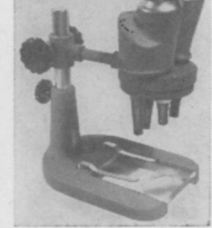
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