

PUBLIC HEALTH

Predict Local Flu Epidemic

The nation will not be hit by as severe an influenza epidemic this fall and winter as last year. However, localized epidemics are predicted.

► EPIDEMICS of influenza are predicted to hit the nation this fall and winter, but they are expected to be more localized and less severe than last year's sweeping outbreak.

The first serious indications that flu viruses have gripped segments of the population are expected around the first of December, Dr. C. C. Dauer, medical adviser of the National Office of Vital Statistics of the U. S. Public Health Service, reported.

The Asian strain of influenza is expected to make another appearance this year, but, on the whole, experts predict that outbreaks will be confined to specific geographic locations, in contrast to last year's nationwide epidemic, Dr. Dauer said.

A plentiful supply of influenza vaccine is now on hand to ward off the development of another epidemic as serious as the 1957 pandemic that affected an estimated 80,000,000 persons in this country alone. While not all of these persons were diagnosed as positive victims of influenza, each suffered some respiratory ailment between July 1 and Dec. 1, 1957, a U.S. National Health Survey reported.

The recommended dosage for protection against the major strains of flu viruses, including the Asian strain, is two doses, two weeks apart.

A polyvalent influenza vaccine that offers protection against the Asian, Swine, A, A-prime and B strains of the disease will be administered during October to all U.S. Army personnel on active duty, the Army Surgeon General's Office announced.

Symptoms of the disease include not only the suddenness of the onset, but prostration, chills, headache, pain in the back, limbs and muscles, runny nose, soreness of the throat, and chest pains. Profuse sweats and high fever also accompany these symptoms.

Especially singled out for early protection against flu this fall are doctors, nurses, hospital staffs, the aged, the chronically ill, and pregnant women. Groups of persons living in close proximity where influenza could spread rapidly, such as institutions, were also included by Dr. Leroy Burney, surgeon general of the Public Health Service, reporting in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Sept. 6).

While there is no indication at present of widespread attacks of influenza this fall and winter, there undoubtedly will be some influenza, and vaccination is a prudent measure for certain groups and individuals, he says.

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● RADIO

Saturday, Oct. 4, 1958, 1:30-1:45 p.m., EDT

"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Alfred J. Eggers Jr., aeronautic research scientist, Ames Aeronautical Laboratory of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, Moffet Field, Calif., will discuss "Getting Back From Space."

TECHNOLOGY

Blind Can "Hear" Ordinary Print

► THE BLIND can now "read" with the aid of a new scanning device that interprets each letter as a musical tone, the Veterans Administration has reported.

The advantage of this device over Braille is that it enables the blind for the first time to read material in normal print, including even typewritten business correspondence.

The portable unit, called an "aural reading machine," was designed and is being evaluated by the Battelle Memorial Institute of Columbus, Ohio, under a Veterans Administration contract.

As now developed, the device interprets individual letters as music-like tones. The blind are first taught to recognize the tone patterns on a tape recording. Then they learn the patterns of words, and finally, phrases. When the device scans printed type, the familiar tone patterns are reproduced and the blind interpret the tones as words or phrases. Users could attain a reading speed of from 15 to 30 words per minute.

The Battelle reader is about the size and shape of a portable radio. It weighs approximately nine pounds and is housed in a wooden case measuring about seven by nine by eight inches. It has knobs for volume, light intensity, and an electric power switch.

The user holds a small probe in his hand which he moves over the printed material to be read. The probe contains two tiny lights and a lens that projects an image of the printed letter upon a row of photocells. Each photocell, when it "sees" black, acts like the key of an electric organ to turn on an oscillator in the chassis to generate a specific pitch proportional to the height of the black portion of the letter "seen." These pitches are translated to sound patterns by the earphones.

Any printed matter can be so read by this method, providing it is in English type, the VA reported.

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AURAL READING MACHINE—A blind man "reads" normal printed matter with the help of a new scanning device. The box-like apparatus at the left is part of the reader. Knobs control the volume and light intensity; an electric power switch is also present. The blind person moves the small probe over the printed words, setting in action a chain of events that turns the printed word into a musical sound.