

MEDICINE

Urge Care in Drug Use

A better understanding of the differences between antibiotics together with more care in prescribing them may help the physician in treating his patients.

➤ **PHYSICIANS** are urged to treat infections with more common sense and fewer antibiotics.

There are many occasions when physicians can practice the empirical approach to medicine to their advantage and the patient's also. Use common sense based upon past clinical experiences, Dr. Wesley W. Spink of Minneapolis told a group of colleagues attending a panel discussion at the clinical meeting of the American Medical Association in Minneapolis. Dr. Spink was moderator for a panel discussion on the use and abuse of antibiotics.

Too often, he cautioned, we rely on the results of some electronic device for an accurate diagnosis to determine what the infection is and which antibiotic is most suitable. By the time a physician receives the diagnosis from an internist, it may be too late. In many instances such as this, a common sense diagnosis and immediate application of medication is a better choice of action.

Dr. Spink predicts an increase in the incidence of urinary tract infection as our older age group increases in number. He predicted that it will be the number-one problem of the general practitioner in the near future.

Perhaps only 20% of all urinary tract infections are cured by antibiotics and other treatments, he said. The remaining 80% experience recurring infection.

Dr. Spink urged physicians to study and better understand the differences between antibiotics in relation to their abilities to control different organisms; applications to the patient, oral or intramuscular; and effects upon the patient.

Regarding the overuse of antibiotics, Dr. Spink was definitely against the administration of anything such as penicillin for the patient with the common cold. He pointed out that overuse also stemmed from the fact that physicians do not fully understand the potentials of each antibiotic. Therefore, they may administer an ineffectual drug that must be followed by the administration of another more suitable antibiotic to control the infection.

Poison Ivy Pills

➤ A **POISON** ivy pill can offer season-long immunity against America's common summer skin rash.

The latest study included 106 adults and children of whom 68 had a past history of sensitivity to poison ivy. Two of the 68 evidenced a rash that disappeared as treatment continued, Dr. Robert J. Langs of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, reported at the clinical meeting.

The others who took the tablets developed an immunity to poison ivy. The immunity becomes effective four weeks after initial medication. It offers protection against poison ivy and poison oak.

The tablets are labeled Aqua Ivy by the manufacturers, Syntex Chemical Company, Inc., New York.

Previous studies on 142 Coast Guardsmen demonstrated that the oral tablet offered highly satisfactory protection against poison ivy, Dr. Langs said.

The standard dosage that will develop immunity includes one tablet every other day for the first two weeks. This is then followed by one tablet daily for the next two weeks. Then two tablets taken daily for the following two weeks will establish immunity but the two-tablet dosage must be maintained for the remainder of the season to perpetuate immunity for the season, Dr. Langs advised.

Results of the studies also revealed that a decrease in sensitivity to poison ivy lasted for one year after the last tablet had been taken.

This means that now, when the family is planning a summer camping trip in the poison ivy or poison oak infested area, children and adults can obtain immunity by beginning the dosage six weeks before the planned trip.

Working with Dr. Langs was Dr. A. Fuchs of New York University Post Graduate Medical School, Bellevue-Medical Center, and Miss Margaret B. Strauss of the Allergy Laboratory University Hospital, New York University Bellevue-Medical Center.

Science News Letter, December 20, 1958

GENERAL SCIENCE

Top Science Advances Picked by Science Service

➤ **THE TOP** important advances in science and technology during 1958 as picked by Watson Davis, director of **SCIENCE SERVICE**, are:

1. Opening of the era of jet air passenger transportation by inauguration of transatlantic services.

2. Attempts to send rockets to the vicinity of the moon, resulting in the farthest probing into outer space, more than a quarter of the way to the moon.

3. Second atoms for peace conference marked by exhibits showing progress toward the harnessing of the hydrogen bomb fusion reaction for power.

4. Close of the International Geophysical Year, which saw the highest number of sunspots in recorded history and intensive

exploration and occupation of Antarctica.

5. Atomic submarine voyages, including those of the Nautilus and Skate from ocean to ocean under the arctic ice.

6. Evidence that schizophrenia may be the result of chemical immaturity.

7. Discovery through exploration by satellites of intensive radiation from about 350 miles outward that may hamper space exploration.

8. The duplication of the basic steps in photosynthesis outside the living plant.

9. Rise of infections, particularly in hospitals, that are resistant to antibiotics.

10. Discovery that a 45,000-year-old Neanderthal skeleton found in Iraq bears what seems to be the earliest known example of surgery.

Science News Letter, December 20, 1958

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 74 DECEMBER 20, 1958 NO. 25

Edited by WATSON DAVIS

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by **SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc.**, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6, D. C., NORTH 7-2255. Cable Address: **SCIENSERV.**

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; ten or more copies in one package to one address, 7½ cents per copy per week; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

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Printed in U.S.A. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1897. Acceptance for mailing at the special rate of postage provided for by Sec. 34.40 P. L. and R., 1948 Edition, paragraph (d) (act of February 28, 1925; 39 U. S. Code 283) authorized February 28, 1950. Established in mimeograph form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index. Member Audit Bureau of Circulation.



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