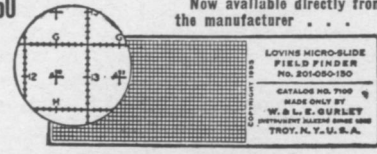


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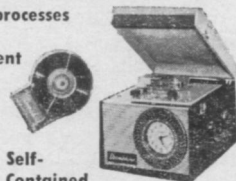
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MEDICINE

Drug Holds Promise in Artery Disease Control

➤ A PILL that might one day, after much more experimentation, mean the control of atherosclerosis was described to scientists meeting at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology in Atlantic City.

The amount of cholesterol, believed to be a contributing cause of some heart and artery disease, was lowered by the administration of a new drug, Mer-29, Dr. Thomas R. Blohm of the Wm. S. Merrell Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, reported.

In tests with monkeys and rats, Dr. Blohm and associates found that both the total cholesterol in the body and serum cholesterol was reduced. Mer-29 apparently blocks or inhibits the synthesis of cholesterol at some late stage in its production. The interference seems to occur with the conversion of intermediates to cholesterol, studies with carbon-14-labeled sodium acetate have indicated.

Plasma cholesterol levels in rats dropped as much as 62% with cholesterol reduction in the aorta of 21%.

Clinical tests of the drug involving some 80 ambulatory patients, about one-half with heart disease, show the drug lowers serum and body cholesterol in humans also. However, the new drug has been tested for only six months, researchers reported. It is still to be determined what the drug's long-term effects would be. As yet, toxicity in the form of nausea and vomiting has been reported as a side effect with higher doses in some persons.

In the clinical tests it "looks like" continuous administration of the drug might be necessary. One pill of 250 milligrams a day was effective in reducing serum cholesterol. However, after the drug was withdrawn, cholesterol levels rose again. No weight changes were reported for the patients.

Science News Letter, April 25, 1959

PUBLIC HEALTH

Proposed FDA Order Limits Lipstick Shades

➤ THE WIDE VARIETY of lipstick colors now available will dwindle rapidly if a recently proposed order of the Food and Drug Administration is finally issued.

The order concerns 17 coal-tar colors that are used principally in lipsticks. The FDA order would remove these colors from the approved list of substances that can be freely used in the manufacture of drugs and cosmetics.

Laboratory tests have shown that these colors cannot be certified as harmless for unrestricted use in products intended for internal consumption. This includes lipstick, which, in normal use, may enter the digestive tract of women and men.

In addition to the order to stop using the 17 colors, FDA proposed an order to ban the use of stocks of these colors. Thus, manufacturers would be prevented from

making new batches of these colors for products that would eventually enter the digestive system, John L. Harvey, deputy commissioner of food and drugs, explained.

The proposed orders would not affect the finished product, however. Lipsticks already produced and those on cosmetic counter shelves could still be sold. Only stocks of the colors already made but not in finished products would be affected.

FDA has not received any reports of injury to users of lipsticks or drugs or foods made with the coal-tar colors being considered.

But under the law as recently interpreted by the Supreme Court, the FDA cannot set the amounts of coal-tar colors to be used in foods, drugs and cosmetics. Therefore, the agency cannot list and certify the safety of colors for unrestricted use unless they are found to be completely harmless, the deputy commissioner added.

The coal-tar colors offer a wider variety of shades than other available colors. Extensive research in this field may produce safer substitutes. Meanwhile, 21 red colors remain unaffected by this order.

The FDA order has invited comments from industry and interested persons. These comments will be reviewed and considered before a final order is drafted.

Science News Letter, April 25, 1959

PLANT PHYSIOLOGY

Yeasts, Though Simple, Can Pick Their Mates

➤ ALTHOUGH some yeast plants probably possess the simplest type of sexual differentiation known, they nevertheless know how to pick their mates.

Recent research reveals for the first time biochemical differences between mating types of some yeasts that seem to explain their mating behavior.

One mating type of the yeast *Hansenula wingei* has been found to possess a specific protein on its cell surface which is complementary to a polysaccharide, a complex carbohydrate, on the cell surface of the opposite mating type.

It had been previously reported that suspensions of the vegetative cells of the two mating types, when brought together under appropriate conditions, would form a mass agglutination, or clumping together of cells, indicating a strong attractive force between the two types. However, exactly why was not understood.

The mating component of one of the types was known to be removable by the enzyme trypsin, and was therefore probably a protein.

The mating component of the other mating type was known to be not a protein and was thus believed to be a polysaccharide.

In studies reported by Thomas D. Brock, department of biology, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, in *Science* (April 10), evidence has been found for the necessity of a polysaccharide for agglutination of one of the mating types.

The research also shows that there is a possibility of studying, at the molecular level, one of the results of gene action.

Science News Letter, April 25, 1959