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MEDICINE

Bees Close to Snakes For Poisoning Deaths

THE BEE is almost as deadly as the rattlesnake statistically and perhaps a faster killer.

During a five-year period the common bee chalked up a grand total of 52 persons known to have died from bee stings. The notorious rattlesnake accounted for 55 deaths.

There was a total of 215 deaths, with an average of 43 a year, due to the bites and stings of venomous animals and insects, according to a report in *Archives of Internal Medicine* (Aug.).

The Hymenoptera—bees, wasps, hornets, yellow jackets and ants—killed 86 persons. In contrast, all poisonous snakes together—rattlers, cottonmouth moccasins, coral and "unidentified"—killed 71 persons. Death from bee stings was usually faster. Several hours usually passed between snake or spider bites and the victims' deaths, while most hymenoptera stings resulted in death within one hour.

More children died of snake bite than from bee stings, reports Dr. Henry M. Parrish of the University of Vermont College of Medicine, Burlington. This is probably due to the fact that bee sting deaths are actually severe allergic shock reactions and the person must have been sensitized to the insect venom, he says.

As a result of his study, Dr. Parrish believes that previous estimates of the incidence of bites and stings by venomous animals are far too low. Although venom poisoning can not be classed as a major medical problem, he says, it is much commoner than formerly recognized.

Since the venomous animals and insects are found in every state, a physician should find out which species are indigenous to his state, become familiar with the clinical manifestations of venom poisoning, and keep up with the latest therapy, Dr. Parrish concludes.

Science News Letter, September 12, 1959

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychologists Differ on Causes of Mental Illness

PSYCHOLOGISTS DISAGREE about sin and guilt and its importance in causing mental illness.

"There is no place whatever for the concept of sin in psychotherapy and to introduce this concept is pernicious." This view was expressed by Dr. Albert Ellis, practicing psychotherapist in New York.

An opposite view was expressed by Dr. O. Hobart Mowrer, research professor at the University of Illinois.

Alcoholics Anonymous, he said, provides the best indication of therapeutic programs of the future in which the psychotherapist will take guilt, confession and expiation seriously in the treatment of mentally sick humans.

Sin and unexpiated guilt lead us, Dr. Mowrer said, if not to a Hell in the hereafter at least to the Hell-on-this-earth of neurosis and psychosis.

Dr. Ellis explained that he does not deny that men can do wrong or that some standard of morality is necessary as long as humans live in social groups. The psychotherapist must help his patients to accept themselves as wrongdoers and acknowledge fully their responsibility for their acts, but this does not mean that the patient must be made to feel sinful and guilty. If he keeps focusing senselessly on "What a horrible sinner, what a blackguard I am! What a louse!" he will become a compulsive wrongdoer. And, to make matters worse, he will not only blame himself but he cannot help blaming fate, circumstances or the universe.

Science News Letter, September 12, 1959

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 76 SEPTEMBER 12, 1959 NO. 11

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, 7 1/2 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. Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C. 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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