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PHARMACOLOGY

Rights and Wrongs Of Medicine Flavoring

► PHARMACEUTICAL manufacturers should not add flavoring to medicine the way a cook might add vanilla to a cake after everything else is in it. "Terminal" flavoring was called a mistake by a pharmacist speaking at the American Pharmaceutical Association convention in Washington.

Fred Wesley of Fritzsche Brothers, Inc., a flavor manufacturing company in New York, said his company advocates "parallel" or "in process" flavoring that is put into the product as it is developed. "Individualized" flavoring means flavoring each component part of the pharmaceutical mixture before it is combined.

He said that benzaldehyde, rather than the finished cherry-flavored mixture, is tried separately as a "fractional" flavoring that is basic. Methyl salicylate and menthol are two other basic flavorings. Taste improvers include ethyl vanillin, corisander oil and orange oil. Vanillin itself is most widely used, forming an integral part of a vast number of flavor compounds for medicines.

Mr. Wesley described "dilute tasting" as tasting medicine in a very dilute form to avoid hurting the taster's sensory keenness.

"Reverse" flavor testing means medicating the flavor instead of flavoring the medicine. All are recommended by flavor manufacturers.

• Science News Letter, 78:158 September 3, 1960

MEDICINE

Tranquilizer Raises Effects of Alcohol

► THE TRANQUILIZER MEPROBAMATE—sold as Miltown, Equanil, Meprospan and Mepro tabs—can turn a couple of drinks into an alcoholic powerhouse, two physicians, a police sergeant and a Ph.D. found.

At different times, the four researchers gave 10 men and 12 women volunteers an innocuous drink, a drink containing only meprobamate, a drink containing enough alcohol to produce about a .05% blood alcohol level, and a drink with the same amount of alcohol plus meprobamate. (The .05% blood level is not enough to impair a person's ability to drive, according to several United States court decisions.)

The volunteers were at their worst on psychological tests after the combined meprobamate and alcohol. In the clinical judgment of two of the experimenters, the combined shot produced more intoxication effects than the alcohol alone in 16 of the volunteers.

"On the day of the combined drug dosage, four of the subjects were quite obviously drunk," the researchers report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 173:1823, 1960.

The tests were made at the Madison State Hospital in Madison, Ind., by Dr. George A. Zirkle (Ph.D.), Drs. Otto B. McAtee and Peter D. King, all of the state hospital, and Sgt. Robert Van Dyke of the Indiana State Police.

• Science News Letter, 78:158 September 3, 1960