

PSYCHIATRY

Elephant Killed by Drugs

➤ TUSKO, an Asiatic elephant in the Lincoln Park Zoo, Oklahoma City, died in epileptic seizures after being injected intramuscularly with d-lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), a drug that brings on symptoms of madness in man.

Tusko might be said to have died on the altar of science, not only as applied to elephant-control work but in pointing out the danger of the drug to humans.

Drs. Louis J. West and Chester M. Pierce of the department of psychiatry, neurology and behavioral science, University of Oklahoma School of Medicine, were attempting to discover the cause of the almost unique phenomenon of periodic madness in the elephant world in their experiment.

What they hoped to do was to induce behavior that might resemble the madness of the male elephant in a period of "musth" during which the beast can become most dangerous. They especially hoped the elephant would excrete the dark brown sticky fluid from the slit-like bilateral temporal gland, located midway between the eye and the ear, which is characteristic of the musth period.

Immediate dissection of the temporal

gland following Tusko's violent death revealed none of the fluid in the duct, but the microscopic structure of the temporal gland was unique, the psychiatrists reported in *Science*, 138:1100, 1962.

"Of greatest interest is the finding that two distinct types of cells are present," they said. They explained that this supports the possibility that the gland may function as both an exocrine (secreting outwardly) and an endocrine (secreting inwardly) organ.

Autosensitization cannot be completely ruled out, they said, implying a close biochemical similarity between LSD and the unknown but perhaps potent intoxicant in the musth secretion.

One possibility is that a male elephant whose temporal glands had been surgically removed early in life might grow up to be a sexually capable but "behaviorally tractable" animal that would never go on musth.

The psychiatrists pointed out that LSD has been increasingly and sometimes irresponsibly administered to humans as an adjunct to psychotherapy, in spite of efforts by its manufacturer (Sandoz) to prevent misuse of the drug.

• *Science News Letter*, 82:396 December 22, 1962

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mailed Pills Kill Child

➤ THE DEATH of an 18-month-old girl from strychnine pills mailed to a neighbor prompted a joint warning by the Post Office Department and the Food and Drug Administration:

Only packages that are "tamper-proof" against children should be used for any mailing of drugs and hazardous chemicals. Care by both shippers and receivers in handling mailed drugs is necessary.

The strychnine medicine had been prescribed by a physician but was picked up at a shared rural mailbox by the mother of the child and left on a dresser pending the neighbor's return. She found her daughter and son playing with the pills and rushed them to the hospital. The boy survived but the girl died.

A survey revealed other potentially serious circumstances that could lead to tragedies.

A Detroit woman reported that a free sample of bleach had been left on the doorstep. It was plainly labeled "Toxic: Keep Out of the Reach of Children," but children who could not read were endangered.

An 11-year-old boy was mistakenly put on a mailing list for physicians' samples that he hid in his room and took from time to time. While under the influence of the drugs, he broke church windows and became so delinquent that he came to the attention of local authorities.

Many families dispose of out-dated or unused drugs by throwing them in the trash can in their original containers. Unless these drugs are burned or flushed down the drain, they are a potential danger to children who

sometimes look into trash cans for toys and other things of interest.

Another district reported protests from mothers who received in the mail free samples of cough medicines and other drug products opened by children without their parents' knowledge. One child had to be hospitalized because he opened pills mailed to a professor of medicine.

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DERMATOLOGY

Hormones in Cosmetics May Be Dangerous

➤ HORMONES in cosmetics have yet to show effectiveness and may be dangerous, a Boston University professor told a symposium on cosmetic aspects of dermatology in Chicago.

Dr. John S. Strauss said there is usually no scientific data supporting advertising claims of life-giving and rejuvenating qualities in estrogen-containing cosmetics. Laboratory experiments show no help for animal skin, the dermatology professor said.

A plea for sane advertising and more information from cosmetic manufacturers was sounded by Dr. Strauss and other speakers at the symposium, which was sponsored by the American Medical Association Committee on Cosmetics. The symposium was held in connection with the annual meeting of the American Academy on Dermatology.

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Questions

ASTRONOMY—What two new minerals have been identified in meteorites? p. 394.

BOTANY—When was the first Christmas wreath brought to the United States? p. 405.

GENERAL SCIENCE—What chemical is used for immunization against malaria? p. 397.

GEOPHYSICS—In many major coal mine disasters, what compound causes the first explosion? p. 407.

MEDICINE—What may result from excessive amounts of vitamin A in the diet? p. 408.

PUBLIC HEALTH—Why is air pollution in London worse than in the United States? p. 395.

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 82 DECEMBER 22, 1962 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: SCIENSERVIC.

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. Change of address: Three weeks notice is required. Please state exactly how magazine is addressed. Include postal zone number.

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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 of Audit Bureau of Circulation.



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