

PUBLIC HEALTH

Doctors Argue Value Of New Drug Laws

► DOCTORS are divided as to whether the new Food and Drug Administration regulations on drugs are valuable and will increase drug safety or will hinder the development of new drugs.

A poll of clinical investigators in medical schools throughout the country showed that 200 of 640 believed the regulations would increase drug safety. However, others believe the overall effect will be to decrease research on new drugs.

One good aspect of the FDA regulations will be to stop pharmaceutical houses from passing out samples merely to promote sales. Testing by poor investigators also will be discouraged.

However, the increased paper work will stop many investigations.

One suggestion for helping the situation is to have FDA recognize certain investigators as competent enough that they would not be required to do any more paper work than they had previously done.

"But here is a touchy thing. No one has been assigned to decide who are and who are not good investigators," Dr. William M. M. Kirby, chairman of the standing committee on the study of new drugs, Association of Medical Colleges, and professor of medicine, the University of Washington, said.

A warning that the increased paper work is likely to increase the price of drugs was sounded by Dr. Wesley W. Spink of the University of Minnesota Medical School, president of the American College of Physicians.

"One Congressional group is pressing for safer and effective drugs, while another is speaking out for lower prices," he said. "The American public should know, simply as a probable statement of fact, that if the present Federal regulations are put into effect, more of the taxpayers' money will have to be expended for this purpose."

The constant conflict between pharmaceutical companies' research and sales departments was cited by Dr. Spink. He said this may have partly accounted for the more stringent Federal control.

• Science News Letter, 84:20 July 13, 1963

PSYCHOLOGY

Scaring to Death Keeps Alcoholics Dry

► A NEW WAY to cure alcoholism—scare a man nearly to death—is being perfected.

First the alcoholic is terrified. Then he is given a few sips of his favorite liquor.

After the trauma, the scientists have found, the alcoholic does not want to touch the stuff again. The taste, the smell and even the idea of alcohol bring back the moment of terror. Drinking can never be pleasant again.

The scare has to be extremely powerful to make an alcoholic abstain. The scientists give the alcoholic a drug that destroys his

ability to breathe by paralyzing all his muscles.

The paralysis lasts from 60 to 90 seconds. It is so terrifying, as the alcoholic later reports, it convinces him he is going to die.

The method seems to work. Half of 12 men, paralyzed for the first time, stopped drinking altogether. One told the scientists that after he got out of the hospital, he found himself in a local pub. He took a sip of beer, but choked up and had to spit it out.

Aversions to all types of liquors, to lighter fluid, antifreeze and even television commercials for beer were reported.

Some of the patients, the scientists found, did return to alcoholism. Perhaps the connection between terror and liquor was not firmly established, they explained, or perhaps the men could not find a substitute for the alcoholic way of life.

Work to prove that traumatic conditioning alone causes abstinence is still needed, Drs. R. E. Sanderson, Dugal Campbell and S. G. Laverty of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, reported in the Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 24:261, 1963.

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PSYCHIATRY

Ultrasonic Treatment Helps Mental Patients

► ULTRASONIC treatment helps mentally ill patients return to normal living.

Up to 80% of certain types of mental illnesses have been successfully reversed by Prefrontal Sonic Treatment, the inventor of the method told the American Psychiatric Association meeting in St. Louis.

The sonic treatment, called PST, works well for patients with symptoms of anxiety, depression and compulsion, Dr. Petter Lindstrom of the University of Utah College of Medicine reported. It does not, however, help personality disorders, severe social maladjustment or other symptoms related to a past history of chronic mental illness.

PST was developed by Dr. Lindstrom during the past nine years as a substitute for lobotomy. It has none of the serious complications associated with the removal of a portion of the brain, Dr. Lindstrom said.

The treatment itself is "relatively painless and not uncomfortable," he said. In two treatments, patients receive ultrasound waves of one million cycles per second. The waves disrupt the nerve pathways of the brain. Thus, Dr. Lindstrom explained, the treatment removes the symptoms of the patients' illnesses and allows them about three months of self-adjustment.

Relapses have occurred in about 20% of the patients, he said. Additional treatments have then been effective.

The PST method, Dr. Lindstrom believes, may be a way to "restore to society" those mentally ill patients who have not been able to receive or respond to drug or electroshock therapy.

Dr. Lindstrom was assisted in his studies by Dr. Louis Moench and Dr. Agnes Rovnanek, also of the University of Utah College of Medicine.

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