

PUBLIC HEALTH

U. S. Food Safe From DDT

► TRACES of the deadly pesticide DDT can be measured on some foods, but the amount is usually too small to affect safety, a U. S. Food and Drug Administration scientist said.

Shipments of crops very seldom contain residues above two or three parts per million of DDT (short for dichloro-diphenyl trichloroethane). The legal tolerance limit established for DDT on more than 40 different fruits and vegetables is seven parts per million.

Dr. Robert S. Roe, director, FDA's bureau of scientific standards and evaluation, said about 130 different chemical substances are involved in tolerance regulations issued by the FDA under its Pesticide Amendment.

Dr. Roe told the 79th anniversary convention of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation in Washington, D. C., that the FDA last year seized 40 shipments of foods out of 25,000 samples analyzed in its laboratories for illegal residues of pesticides.

"This study originally was undertaken to check possible development of radioactivity in our food supply as a result of fallout," Dr. Roe explained. "This check also is being continued."

Nutritive values such as vitamins are being examined by the FDA in total diet samples. No deficiencies were found, which means that if a person eats a well balanced diet he does not need to buy expensive supplements.

"Much has been said by self-styled nutritionists and promoters of special dietary foods as to nutritive deficiencies in our food resulting from soil depletion, overrefinement and destruction in food processing," Dr. Roe said. The results of FDA's studies prove this attack to be unfounded.

Dr. Frances O. Kelsey, chief of FDA's investigational drug branch, told the same meeting that continued precautions are

followed by FDA even after a drug is thoroughly tested and on the market.

The investigational stage of a new drug may involve some 5,000 subjects, Dr. Kelsey said, and yet certain severe side effects may occur in only one in 10,000 or 50,000 patients.

Both the FDA and American Medical Association have "adverse reaction reporting programs" with hundreds of cooperating medical centers.

Dr. Kelsey, who received an award from the late President Kennedy for keeping thalidomide off the American market, said it is hoped that the adverse reaction program would keep future drug disasters such as the child-deforming results of thalidomide in other countries, from happening.

The lack of truly informative health information in advertising was deplored by Dr. Kelsey, who said "the population at large is exposed to a distracting amount of propaganda, nearly all of which is directive."

By being told to go out and buy a product, many consumers are being deprived of the right to exercise their basic human right of personal judgment.

• Science News Letter, 85:350 May 30, 1964

PUBLIC HEALTH

'Big Breakthrough' Seen In Birth Control Action

► MANY PEOPLE are beginning to do something about birth control instead of just theorizing about it, believes a leading doctor working on the population explosion problem.

Last year, "the year of the big breakthrough," massive increases in demand for birth control methods were recorded at birth control centers throughout the country, stated Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, president of Planned Parenthood-World Population, New York, in his annual report.

Nearly 25% more people were served last year by the Planned Parenthood centers, he said. The number of women choosing oral contraceptive pills jumped more than 60%, he added.

Since nearly seven out of every ten families guided at the centers have net incomes below \$4,000 a year, Dr. Guttmacher said, the increase in demands shows the "eager acceptance of sympathetic and authoritative family planning guidance by low-income families."

Dr. Guttmacher cited three other major developments that occurred last year in the birth control program. First is the growing U. S. official policy and public support for action programs, and the adoption by Congress of its first legislation in the area of birth control.

Second is the increasing responsibility being taken on by tax-supported health and welfare agencies.

Third is the "deepening of discussions between non-Catholics and Catholics aimed at solutions which respect the conscientious convictions of all faiths."

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TECHNOLOGY

Talking Typewriter Teaches Tots and Blind

► A TYPEWRITER that talks is helping young children learn to read and type.

First the child types a letter, word or complete sentence on a standard electric typewriter keyboard. If he has done it correctly, according to the teacher's programmed instructions, the typewriter "speaks" the word out loud from a tape recorded "memory." The device will only work when the child has typed the letters in the proper sequence.

Developed by Westinghouse scientists, the device will be placed in the reading laboratory of the University of Pittsburgh. Uses include teaching the alphabet, sentence structure and foreign languages. The blind may also find help in learning to type.

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Westinghouse

TYPE AND HEAR LETTERS—Four-year-old Lee Castle uses the new learning machine developed at the Westinghouse Research Laboratories which accelerates the rate of language learning among preschool children.

Do You Know?

The fuselage of an aircraft flying 300 miles an hour is 16 degrees hotter than when the plane is on the runway, due to air friction.

A simple, routine test for determining the amount of available lysine, an essential amino acid of proteins, in cottonseed meal and other oilseed meals has been developed.

A group of sociologists reports that student counseling forces academic specialization too early, and probes for "problems" that are merely normal signs of adolescence.

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