

Encephalitis Subsiding

► THE HOUSTON, TEXAS, epidemic of encephalitis, sometimes called brain fever or sleeping sickness, continues to wane, but not through use of a vaccine. This year's epidemic is believed to be the St. Louis variety, for which there is no vaccine.

So far, more than 30 have died in Texas alone. Unrelated cases have been reported in Illinois, Kentucky and other states.

The only means of controlling the epidemic, the U.S. Public Health Service says, is spraying, "fogging" and oiling ponds and other breeding places of mosquitoes responsible for carrying the virus. These control measures are being used. People also have been warned to use screens and avoid contact with mosquitoes after sundown when they are most voracious.

Why is the death rate so high? The answer to that lies in the age of the persons affected. Most of the Houston victims were over 50 years, so they are more vulnerable to disease than younger persons, Dr. Carl C. Dauer, medical advisor on health statistics, PHS, said.

Here are some facts on the present outbreak:

Nationally, the 1964 total for reported encephalitis cases so far is more than 2,275.

There are three distinct types of mosquito-borne encephalitis infections in the United States, but St. Louis encephalitis is believed

to be the only form responsible for the epidemic. The other two forms are Western and Eastern encephalitis.

Encephalitis can be caused by injury as well as mumps, measles and other diseases.

August and September are always a bad period for mosquito-borne encephalitis, and cases occur every year during these months. In Houston and the surrounding area, which is irrigated from underground sources, mosquitoes are a chronic problem. The suspected carrier of the sleeping sickness virus there is a domestic mosquito called *Culex quinquefasciatus*.

The problem of sleeping sickness is complicated, and the disease is not easy to diagnose accurately. Early symptoms are the same as one sees in a variety of diseases—headaches, nausea, fever, sore throat, chills or all of them. The symptoms can be accompanied by stiff neck, drowsiness, trembling, mental confusion, convulsions and coma. In mild cases, the only way to diagnose encephalitis is through laboratory testing, as by examination of blood serum.

Encephalitis victims may recover completely but in the case of children with the Eastern type, brain damage often follows the illness. In general, it is babies and the elderly who are more likely to die from encephalitis.

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BACTERIOLOGY

Keeping Hospital Clean

► IT TAKES MORE than a mop to keep a hospital sanitary as well as clean on the surface.

The University of Michigan Hospital uses 70 men trained in chemistry, bacteriology and sanitation, working under directions from a 200-page book on environmental sanitation. The book is believed to be the first detailed procedure manual ever written on hospital cleanliness. It was compiled by University Hospital personnel and is a model for hospitals throughout the United States.

Elaborate cleaning methods are not necessarily expensive, however, said an associate director of the hospital, Minor Vandermade.

"Finding the proper chemistry of floor cleaning and surface protection has reduced costs 25% by eliminating buffing requirements and prolonging the life of the surface coating," he explained.

Staphylococcal infections that plague some hospitals are believed traceable to the old mop and bucket methods of cleaning, and not too many years ago, epidemic diseases such as gas gangrene could turn a hospital into a death house. Lister and Pasteur learned to control those diseases.

The book describes 59 separate cleaning operations for everything from floors to drinking fountains and swimming pools. In addition to removing obvious dirt and soil, all hospitals strive to control infectious agents and potential sources of contamination.

The sanitation directions cover such topics as microorganisms and disease, isolation techniques, the chemistry of cleaning, insect control and employee safety.

Iodines, chlorines, ammonium derivatives and phenols are used as germicides along with general cleaning operations. One type that is good for laundry tends to "fog" any plastic it touches. Another is most effective on hard surfaces, while a third works best on the patient's bedside equipment.

It is no job for an amateur, the book points out. For example, a wrong cleaner could so cloud a \$1,000 Isolette for a premature baby that a nurse could not see her tiny patient.

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Do You Know?

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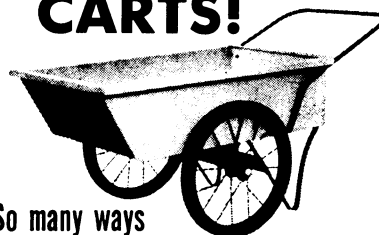
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