

MEDICINE

Cataracts Due to Drugs

► **BABIES** can be born with blinding cataracts as a result of their mothers' taking certain drugs or having a disease such as mumps or measles.

Dr. John G. Bellows of Northwestern University School of Medicine, Chicago, demonstrated the effect of these agents on the eyes of the newborn in a scientific exhibit at the clinical convention of the American Medical Association in Miami Beach, Fla. Dr. Bellows was among the first to report on the role triparanol, or Mer-29, the cholesterol-reducing drug now taken off the market, plays in the formation of cataracts.

A cataract clouds the lens, thus preventing light from entering the eye. The only treatment is surgical removal, and Dr. Bellows demonstrates a new freezing method of removing cataracts. A super-cooled instrument is applied to the opaque lens, fusing it in much the same way as a finger sticks to an ice cube tray in the refrigerator. As the instrument is withdrawn, the cataract slips out with it.

Another exhibit showed how an enzyme that acts normally in the body to dissolve blood clots can be used to treat infants having trouble breathing. The enzyme is plasmin, which can digest fibrin, a protein that is not only the basic building block of blood clots but also is the substance of the harmful hyaline membrane sometimes deposited in the lungs of infants.

Dr. Julian L. Ambrus of the Roswell Park Memorial Institute, Buffalo, N.Y., reported in his scientific exhibit on a study involving 100 infants. He said 80% of those given the plasmin preparation, in addition to conventional treatment, survived. Just 45% of the infants receiving only regular therapy lived.

Babies weighing four and a half pounds or less, whose chances of survival were the worst, showed striking response to the treatment, Dr. Ambrus said. Only 10% of these infants treated by conventional

methods survived, compared with 75% living when treated by plasmin.

An exhibit on height problem showed how premature puberty was brought about to shorten the height of 30 girls and a small number of boys destined to be excessively tall. Drug treatment helped 60% of 61 children of short stature to achieve an increased mature height, Dr. M. James Whitelaw of San Jose, Calif., reported.

Dark circles under the eyes of children are a sign of long-standing nasal allergy, an exhibit by Dr. Meyer B. Marks of Miami Beach, showed. Pressure of swollen, allergic nasal mucous membranes on the veins interferes with natural flow of blood downward and backward through the nasal cavity, he said.

• Science News Letter, 87:109 February 13, 1965

ENTOMOLOGY

Mosquitoes Attack Men First, Then Women

► **IN A SERIES** of tests with yellow fever mosquitoes, scientists found that the insects preferred to bite men rather than women under many different circumstances. Entomologists I. H. Gilbert, H. K. Gouck and Nelson Smith of the Agricultural Research Service, Gainesville, Fla., part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, reported that even when the men were treated with the chemical deet, which is the main ingredient in many commercial repellents, the mosquitoes approached them sooner than they did women treated with the same repellent.

All biting mosquitoes are females. The males drink nectar while the females hunt warm-blooded prey to nourish their offspring.

The scientists discovered that the mosquitoes, *Aedes aegypti*, were attracted more to persons with a higher skin temperature than to those with lower skin temperature. Also, they found that they were attracted to women who perspired heavily more than to those who perspired lightly.

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Do You Know?

At a U.S. Air Force testing center, ground heat generated by a dormant volcano will be used to heat the building through conductive flooring.

Floods killed about 1,300 people in the United States in the last 20 years.

Drinking water prices range from 20¢ per gallon in some parts of the world to 20¢ per 1,000 gallons in U. S. cities.

Adult Japanese beetles feed upon more than 280 types of plants.

If an average medium-size car carrying four persons at a speed of 60 miles per hour struck a solid object in a head-on collision, the destructive power would match that of a cup and one-half of nitroglycerin.

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Doctors Trim Flabby Waists!

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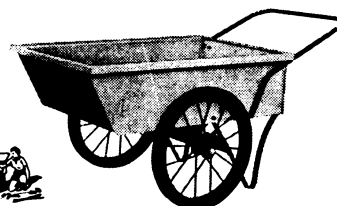
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