

GENERAL SCIENCE

AMA Asks Hospital Aid

The American Medical Association is asking the American Hospital Association to forego desires to change the status of four specialty services under Medicare.

► A PLEA that the American Hospital Association end its differences with the American Medical Association over the services of radiologists, pathologists, anesthesiologists and physiatrists under Medicare was voiced in San Francisco by AMA's president, Dr. James Z. Appel.

"In all probability," Dr. Appel told the AMA convention, "you will try to get the law changed," backing the Douglas amendment. He was referring to an amendment introduced by Sen. Paul H. Douglas (D-Ill.), on which the Administration hopes the Senate Finance Committee will hold hearings early in 1966.

This amendment would place the four specialty services under Part A—the hospital part of Medicare—instead of under Part B, which requires voluntary payment of \$3.00 per month by the elderly under Social Security.

"Our two associations are splintering their efforts and impeding their effectiveness by engaging in this particular contentious quarrel," Dr. Appel said.

"Never in the history of our two associations has it been more important for the organizations to work cooperatively," he said. "Together we can promote the public health and the science and art of medicine." Continuing to work "divisively," he said, the two organizations will impede health care and reduce their effectiveness.

At an earlier meeting, Robert M. Ball, Commissioner of Social Security, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, promised to avoid red tape in administration of the Medicare law, which has been in effect slightly more than a month.

"We in Social Security are very proud of our ability to run a vast Government program efficiently and with a sympathetic individualized concern for each person affected," he said. "We intend to keep it up."

Millions of descriptive pamphlets have been distributed to the persons affected, Mr. Ball reported. He said that within a short period his department would begin to distribute materials to all the Social Security beneficiaries and railroad annuity holders in the country who are 65 or older.

"Over the next two or three months we will mail to each beneficiary a pamphlet describing the plans with an application card for supplementary medical insurance, prepunched with his name and account number." He can simply check "yes" or "no" and sign his name.

Mr. Ball said the form was one of the simplest in the history of Government.

"Next spring we will mail an eligibility card, similar in purpose to a Blue Cross card, to all who have established their eligibility for hospital insurance. The card

will show if a person has signed up for the supplementary plan."

Policy matters included mention of individual cases hospitalized for long periods which, the Commissioner said, were not going to be "subject to Federal review."

One matter that needs very early attention is the nomination of "fiscal intermediaries" by hospitals that wish to nominate them.

"We have been working for some time," said Mr. Ball, "with the private organizations which are among those most likely to be chosen as fiscal intermediaries on basic administration questions relating to policy and procedure."

Mr. Ball said he did not foresee in the area of claims procedure any significant departure from the basic procedures now utilized by other large prepayment organizations. Also, the physician will determine for his patients, as he always has, "the nature of the services required."

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BIOCHEMISTRY

New Paths Opened For Epilepsy Studies

► NEW PATHS for studying a rare kind of convulsion have been opened by Dr. Samuel Natelson, chief of chemistry at Chicago's Michael Reese Hospital.

Epilepsy not the result of a brain tumor or any other observable cause falls in the category of idiopathic (unknown disease) convulsion.

Dr. Natelson has investigated convulsions in terms of the balance between calcium and citric acid in the body. Calcium in a free state seems to prevent or reduce idiopathic convulsions, he found.

Dr. Natelson also found that citric acid induced by large doses of the hormone ACTH would reduce calcium levels in rabbits and bring on convulsions. That result, however, does not occur in most human convulsions, the chemist told the Clinical Chemists Convention in Chicago.

The paths opened by Dr. Natelson's studies include the need for new methods of measuring calcium levels during convulsions, since present methods do not reveal the actual amount of usable calcium. Only when it is free, uncombined with proteins, can calcium block convulsions.

Dr. Natelson's work has also pointed the way to investigating causes of muscle "freezing," other than by large doses of ACTH. The origin of many calcium deficiencies, such as those Dr. Natelson induced in rabbits, is still unknown.

Besides his work on epilepsy, Dr. Natelson has developed techniques for testing extremely small samples of blood, particu-

larly important to the diagnosis and treatment of premature babies.

Dr. Natelson's work in microchemistry earned for him the 1965 Ames Award in clinical chemistry, which carries a grant of \$1,000.

Most recently, Dr. Natelson reports having developed a new process for isolating proteins. The method, a modification of the old "continuous electrophoresis" process, will separate pure proteins, the chemist claims. Before this claim, no process was known to be capable of doing this.

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MEDICINE

'Kissing Disease' Test Takes Only Two Minutes

► A TWO-MINUTE Mono-Test for infectious mononucleosis, sometimes called the "kissing disease" because of one way it is transmitted, is ready for marketing.

Dr. Souren Avakian, vice president and research director for Wampole Laboratories at Stamford, Conn., said that physicians have long sought a quick test to confirm or rule out "mono," since the present method may take days.

The disease is probably caused by a virus, although the specific one has not been identified. There are a number of other conditions that have symptoms easily confused with those of mononucleosis, such as acute appendicitis and other abdominal ailments requiring surgery, several forms of leukemia, hepatitis, meningitis and encephalitis.

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Sierracin Corporation

CRADLE WARMER—Technology developed in the electrical heating of windshields for aircraft and space vehicles is being used in this cradle warmer, produced by the Sierracin Corporation, Sylmar, Calif. The canopy is a curved sheet of laminated plastic, containing a transparent metallic coating, which is electrically heated to provide radiant warmth for the newborn baby.