

Preventicare Needed

► **THE NEXT STEP** after Medicare is Preventicare, which according to an American Medical Association legislative attorney, covers about everything in the field of health protection except toenails.

With fungus growths attacking the nails of the elderly, however, this may be no laughing matter.

"Medicare doesn't do a blessed thing to prevent disease," Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr. (D-N.J.), who introduced the so-called Preventicare bill last February, said at a hearing of the Subcommittee on Health of the Elderly.

"I think more and more people will eventually ask why we should wait for chronic illness to strike before we really begin to cope with it," Sen. Williams said at the hearing, which has been characterized as "nonlegislative" and "unrelated to any specific bill."

Paul R. M. Donelan, legislative attorney for the AMA Washington office, however, told a meeting of pathologists in Washington, D.C., that the subcommittee hearings on modern health screening methods to detect and prevent chronic illness are obviously developing information to be used in behalf of the Preventicare bill next year in the 90th Congress.

Sen. Maurine Neuberger (D-Oreg.), chairman of the subcommittee dealing with the health of the elderly, said the purpose of the hearings is to explore "the national interest in programs which might reduce the price we pay for failing to recognize disease when early detection could have saved lives and misery."

It now costs the United States approximately \$93.5 billion a year for all expense related to illness, disability and death, Sen. Neuberger said in opening the three-day hearings. She arranged

for the District of Columbia Department of Health to bring its Mobile Health Screening Unit to the New Senate Office Building entrance to demonstrate tests and examinations that can be given.

Sen. Williams' bill calls for free, voluntary comprehensive health tests for anyone past age 50. "We would establish centers and local units using the latest in modern equipment," he said in describing community health protection centers.

Attorney Donelan warned that Sen. Williams' bill, which is identical to a House bill introduced by Congressman John E. Fogarty (D-R.I.) would authorize the appropriation of \$10 million for fiscal 1967, \$20 million for 1968 and \$30 million for 1969 to be used by the Surgeon General to make grants to medical schools, community hospitals, health departments and other public or nonprofit agencies to assist them in planning, establishing and operating regional community protection centers.

More than 1,500 bills affecting health and medicine in the present 89th Congress have been analyzed by Mr. Donelan, who said the figure can be expected to increase in the remaining month of this Congress because some members will introduce bills for consideration in the next Congress.

"Twelve years ago," said Mr. Donelan, "when I first came to the AMA, the 84th Congress, in its two years, produced 407 bills of interest to medicine."

All of the bills introduced have their effect, for good or evil, on the practice of pathology, as indeed all Federal legislation has its effect on the pathologist as a citizen, the attorney continued. The subjects covered by these 1,500 bills range from alcoholism to water pollution, and from the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden to unemployment compensation.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Contraceptives, Bleach Poison Young Children

► **SOAPS**, detergents and cleansers; bleach; vitamins and minerals; insecticides; plants; polishes and waxes; hormones, including oral contraceptives and thyroid tablets; tranquilizers; other analgesics and fever-reducing pills are among the most frequent causes of accidental poisoning in children under five, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare has reported.

One-fourth of all children in that age group who swallowed harmful substances took aspirin according to the 1965 records of the National Clearinghouse for Poison Control Centers.

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