

Medical Sciences Notes

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Two Kinds of Infectious Hepatitis

Scientists have identified two distinct types of infectious hepatitis to explain the occurrence of second attacks of the disease in persons who ought to have developed immunity.

Dr. Saul Krugman of the New York University School of Medicine says evidence suggests serum hepatitis—which was thought to be noninfectious—may in fact be simply another form of infectious hepatitis.

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, often accompanied by jaundice, that is serious in adults but not in children. It can reach epidemic proportions in situations of overcrowding and close contact.

Infectious hepatitis has long been known to be transmitted from one person to another, but scientists have thought serum hepatitis was transmitted only through blood and blood products. It is a fairly common problem in surgical patients and in patients receiving injections or blood transfusions, Dr. Krugman says.

Dr. Krugman and his colleagues report in the current *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* that serum hepatitis may be contagious after all. They also report biochemical test methods for distinguishing the two forms of the disease which are clinically very similar.

Over 25 years ago scientists doing tests on humans discovered that viruses were the cause of hepatitis, but so far these viruses have not been isolated or reproduced for study either in tissue culture or animals.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Mosquitoes on the Way Out

By 1973, just nine years after the start of an anti-mosquito campaign, the *Aedes aegypti* will be eradicated from the United States.

The mosquito, a potential carrier of yellow fever, dengue and hemorrhagic fever, has been the target of a \$23 million attack launched in 1964, the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION* says. The carrier of these viral diseases can still be found in 10 southern states, Hawaii, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. *Aedes aegypti* breed primarily in tree holes and in water containers about the home. Chemical sprays to kill larvae and elimination of breeding sites are part of the eradication program.

Though yellow and hemorrhagic fevers are generally confined to other parts of the world, an outbreak of dengue from 1963 to 1966 infected 100,000 persons in the Caribbean. The eradication program in the U.S. is headed by Dr. James V. Smith of the National Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Ga.

MICROBIOLOGY

Red Rabbits Get Rheumatic Fever

Red-headed children and red rabbits, for some unknown reason, are especially susceptible to rheumatic fever.

Doctors long ago observed that children with red hair and freckles are more likely to contract the heart-damaging disease than others, but the coincidental

similarity in red rabbits is something new.

Dr. Ben H. S. Lau, research microbiologist at the Hinsdale Sanitarium and Hospital, Hinsdale, Ill., reported his observations to the meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in New York last week.

Dr. Lau's experiments are thought to be the first in recent years to successfully induce heart damage in rabbits by injecting them with group A streptococci. Group A streptococci are the strain of bacteria that cause strep throat that sometimes precedes rheumatic fever.

Dr. Lau's work adds weight to other evidence that frequent strep infections are related to subsequent heart damage. Dr. George E. Murphy of Cornell Medical College induced heart damage in red rabbits about 1950, but scientists trying to repeat his work were unsuccessful until now. Perhaps it is because other experimenters used typical white rabbits, Dr. Lau says.

ABORTION

Doctors Favor Liberal Laws

In spite of laws to the contrary, licensed physicians in approved hospitals perform about 10,000 abortions a year in the United States.

A nationwide survey of doctors shows that 87 percent of 40,089 respondents think state laws on therapeutic abortion should be liberalized. A majority of states currently permit termination of pregnancy only to save the life of the mother.

Physicians polled by *MODERN MEDICINE* would like to see liberalization in a number of circumstances, including evidence or serious risk of fetal abnormality, risk to maternal mental health, pregnancy after rape or incest, and illegitimacy. Only 14.3 percent of physicians answering the questionnaire favored laws that would permit abortion at the request of the pregnant woman for any reason.

Abortion reform bills have been written in nearly half the states. Colorado and North Carolina have actually changed their laws. They recently approved abortion, with consent of three qualified physicians, when there is risk of physical or mental damage to the mother, or abnormality in the child, and in cases of rape and incest.

DIAGNOSIS

Dentists Check for Diabetes

Dentists may routinely check their patients—not just for cavities or gum disease—for diabetes, if the plan of a San Francisco doctor is followed.

In a test study of 100 persons Dr. Herman Kaplan put a drop of blood from the patient on a cellulose measuring strip. After 60 seconds he washed the blood away and measured the blood glucose count by the color changes on the strip.

Of 100 experimental patients, 10 had positive responses and seven had confirmed diabetes.

Dr. Kaplan reported his test method in the *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION*. He says diabetic screening should be done regularly as part of research into the relation of diabetes and oral disease.