

Medical Sciences Notes

PEDIATRICS

Light Helps Premature Babies

Premature babies, who often develop jaundice because of an excess of bile pigment called bilirubin, can be saved from this dangerous condition by the use of fluorescent light.

Eighty-eight babies each weighing less than five and a half pounds were divided into two groups at the De-Goesbriand Memorial Hospital in Burlington, Vt., Dr. Jerold Lucey told a recent meeting of the Society of Pediatric Research.

Every second baby was placed in a special bassinet under 20-watt daylight fluorescent light bulbs for their first six days. At the end of that time they were all free of jaundice, while 20 percent of the untreated babies had elevated bilirubin.

Dr. Lucey explains that the light alters the chemistry of bilirubin so it can be excreted with the bile. Exchange transfusion is the usual treatment when jaundice occurs but this drastic procedure carries a definite risk of death.

ALLERGY

Housewives' Eczema

A housewife's hands, exposed to many chemicals in her housekeeping chores, are often affected with eczema due to allergy, two Brooklyn dermatologists report. To determine whether or not this is true, they studied 100 persons, 50 with hand eczema and 50 normal.

Forty-eight of the 50 eczema patients were housewives; the other two were men with similar duties. One was a professional dishwasher, the other had been doing housework for several years because of a peculiar domestic situation.

Further investigation is suggested to find out the relationship of allergy to eczema since 28 percent of the normal persons had allergies without eczema.

Drs. Franklin S. Glickman and Seymour H. Silvers of the Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York, report the study in the ARCHIVES OF DERMATOLOGY for May.

DERMATITIS

Spandex Fiber Can Irritate Skin

Skin irritation is reported in some persons wearing a synthetic elastic fiber called spandex, which is used in brassieres, girdles, hose, swimsuits, waistbands, knit goods such as socks, suits and gloves, and woven sportswear and blouses.

Within the past year, a doctor reports, several examples of allergic contact dermatitis, either of the "weeping" variety or dry and scaly, have been noticed resulting from wearing bras, usually expensive ones, that have spandex straps.

The Memphis, Tenn., doctor wrote to the editor of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (June 5) about a 27-year-old woman who noticed an eruption on her shoulders three months after starting to wear a bra equipped with spandex straps. Patch tests proved that only the part of the bra containing the synthetic material caused dermatitis.

Dr. Mark H. Tannenbaum said spandex has not affected persons allergic to rubber. Spandex is a polyurethane elastomer commercially available as Lycra, Vyrene, Spandelle, Duraspan and Glospan.

NEUROSURGERY

Diagnosis for Spinal Ills

At least six percent of all so-called spinal cord tumors are actually spinal aneurysms that can lead to invalidism or death. Through use of precise X-ray methods and the insertion of a tiny catheter to individual "feeder" arteries where X-ray dye is released, a team of neurosurgeons at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., can now diagnose and surgically correct these vascular malformations of the spinal cord.

The method will be exhibited at the convention of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City this month.

Drs. Giovanni DiChiro, John Doppman and Ayub K. Ommaya say their method eliminates radical cutting of the affected vessel as they tie the feeder vessels close to the cord. Patients tolerate the diagnosis and surgery very well, and dramatic improvements have been seen in diminishing pain and restoring physical movements. The work is reported in the June 2 MEDICAL WORLD NEWS.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Ph.D. Training Underwritten

The first program for training students working toward doctorate degrees in techniques of pollution-free disposal of refuse and other solid wastes will be financed by a \$38,500 Public Health Service grant. It has been awarded to the University of Kansas at Lawrence to help end shortages of technically qualified personnel.

Six institutions already offer solid waste management training at the master's degree level.

CANCER

Sperm Cells Treat Malignancy

A rare form of cancer called choriocarcinoma has responded to treatment by a serum made from blood and sperm cells of the victim's husband, a meeting of the American Radium Society in Toronto, Canada, was told.

Four women are alive and free of cancer from two and a half to six years after such treatment at the Ontario Cancer Institute, Dr. W. D. Rider reports. He worked with Dr. B. A. Cinader, also of the Institute.

The disease usually manifests itself following pregnancy in the form of a mole in the womb, and can spread to the lungs and other parts of the body. It was previously reported cured at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., by Dr. Roy Hertz, now of George Washington University Hospital, Washington, D.C. Dr. Hertz used the drug methotrexate, often used to treat leukemia.