

medical sciences notes

PHARMACOLOGY

Penicillin Substitute Against Gonorrhea

One dose of a new antibiotic for treating gonorrhea has resulted in a cure rate of 96.4 percent in a Georgia study of 289 men. The drug, given by mouth, is methacycline.

While penicillin remains the preferred treatment, a team of Atlanta Public Health Service physicians points out in the January issue of *PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS* that "an increasing percentage of the population is now found to be hypersensitive to penicillin."

Even if a patient responds to penicillin, the dosage has escalated in a period of 20 years from 300,000 units of long-acting forms to 2,400,000 units of short-acting penicillin.

Treatment given at the Fulton County Health Department over a three-month period resulted in the conclusion that methacycline is an acceptable alternative to penicillin in the treatment of gonococcal urethritis in males. Urethritis is inflammation of the urethra, and is not always caused by gonorrhea.

Drs. David G. McLone, Terrence E. Billings, James B. Lucas and James F. Hackney, and technician William E. Hardegree report the study.

The trade name of methacycline, produced commercially by Pfizer Laboratories, is Randomycin. It also is effective in treating ordinary respiratory and a variety of other infections.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Leprosy Control in Burma

Specially trained Burmese volunteers have overcome their fears of leprosy and are aiding the World Health Organization in stamping out the disease in the 14 districts where it is prevalent.

Part of their work is to distribute the drug diphenyl sulfone and to check on its correct use.

During 1968 leprosy control measures will be put into effect all over Burma, where more than a quarter of a million patients have been registered. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is providing transportation, equipment and drugs, and several other groups have made grants to cover salaries of health auxiliaries working in the field.

Medical educators have trained hundreds of workers. One medical officer has received a fellowship to study reconstructive surgery on lepers at an institute in India.

HIGH ALTITUDE

Hazards Seen in Low-Oxygen Life

A study of mountain dwellers in Peru has shown that those born in high altitudes have difficulty in combatting the hazards of low oxygen in situations such as anesthesia.

Dr. John W. Severinghaus, professor of anesthesiology at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, says that because the person born at high altitudes has made adjustments to reduced oxygen con-

tent in the air he breathes, he has lost a vital physiologic alarm system. This could be life-threatening in an emergency.

This person breathes less rapidly and more deeply than the one born at sea level who huffs and puffs when he visits his mountain cousin. As a result, the mountain-born person is more susceptible to respiratory diseases, may lose consciousness without warning when swimming under water and is in greater danger of asphyxiation during deep sleep or when under anesthesia. Desensitization to lack of oxygen and the many influences it may have on persons living at high altitude require careful analysis, Dr. Severinghaus concludes in the report in the Jan. 5 issue of *MEDICAL WORLD NEWS*.

ALLERGY

'Wheat-Free' Breads Often Are Not

Wheat-sensitive patients whose symptoms of the allergy had been controlled, have had them reactivated when they ate commercial bread sold as being wheat-free, an immunologist and two physicians report in the December issue of *CALIFORNIA MEDICINE*.

"Both medical profession and lay public must realize that bakery and other food products sold as being wheat-free may contain gluten and other wheat proteins in spite of labeling to the contrary," they point out.

Accurate labeling and listing of every ingredient are necessary for the benefit of allergic persons. To be certain that such products contain no wheat, patients should make them at home according to wheat-free recipes or should buy them from bakers who are making them by such recipes under a physician's supervision.

Drs. Arthur Lietze, Albert H. Rowe and Albert Rowe Jr. of Oakland report the study.

PODIATRY

Medicare Includes Aged Feet

Professional care for as many as 80 percent of older Americans with foot disorders is now available under the Social Security Amendments of 1967 containing the provision for podiatrists' services under Medicare.

President Johnson had previously recognized the omission of podiatry as a defect in the original Medicare bill and last year urged Congress in his Message on Aging to remedy it.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Selected Patients To Have Brains X-rayed

A University of Michigan neurologist plans to try to counteract the effects of excess gamma globulin in the brains of selected multiple sclerosis patients through X-ray treatments of the brain and possibly other parts of the nervous system.

Dr. Wallace W. Tourtellotte has received the largest single grant ever given by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society—\$97,591—to be spread over three years. He previously discovered that MS victims had increased concentrations of gamma globulin in their brains.

100/science news/vol. 93/27 january 1968