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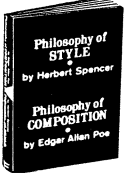
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from abroad

GENEVA

Skin disease rising

More than half of all European occupational illness cases and lost work time have been found to be due to skin diseases.

Surveys in Italy, Sweden and England reveal the extent of the problem, Dr. J. Gay Prieto reports to the World Health Organization. Dr. Prieto is president of the International Committee of Dermatology and the International League of Dermatological Societies. He has formally offered his society's collaboration to the United Nations professional agency.

Occupational dermatoses have been found responsible for up to 85 percent of Italy's insurance payments. In Sweden, eczema alone accounted for 49.4 percent of all occupational illnesses annually, and in England one million to two million sick days are lost each year to specific skin conditions.

Drugs and cosmetic workers suffer from contact with such materials. Persons working with solvents, plastics, rubber, metals, textiles and foods also may be affected.

"We must not forget the youngest and most devastating of our industries, the development of atomic energy," the dermatologist says. "The use of isotopes risks damaging exposure to the skin as well as to the vital tissues."

After the age of 50, there is an increase in occupational dermatitis because there is a lessening of the body's oily secretions and anti-alkaline defenses.

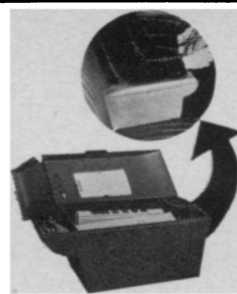
"Some countries are studying the possibility of lowering retirement age for some workers in order to lower the costs arising from the treatment of dermatosis," Dr. Prieto says.

Communist nations have already brought their specialists together, and the international dermatologic teams groups have asked WHO to organize special teams including their own members, chemists, industrial physicians, engineers and jurists, and to call a world conference in Geneva.

A major aim is to unify laws and to establish principles of investigation to decide whether patients are suffering from these conditions or not. In Italy's medical scheme only eight days are required for case acceptance, but in Sweden it takes 90 days.

Dr. Prieto has outlined a broad research program for WHO, including post-graduate training for doctors.

David Alan Ehrlich
(see p. 245)



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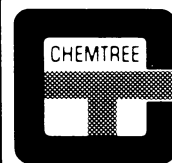
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