

# medical sciences notes

## DIET PILLS

### Senator Hart asks legislation

The Senate diet pill hearings have revealed the probability of at least 35 deaths due to "fat doctors" prescribing the pills in obesity problems.

Senator Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.) said in closing the hearings that he believed his Medical Restraint of Trade Bill (S. 260), which would prevent a doctor selling what he prescribes, except in a few cases, would protect patients from these potentially dangerous pills. The restriction would have implications far beyond the obesity trade.

The bill is still before the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee, of which Hart is chairman.

Although medical opinion remains that it is almost impossible to prove the cause of death in the obesity cases to be from the diet pills, Hart says competent pathologists have assured the subcommittee that the pills can be blamed.

## CONTRACEPTION

### Inner ear trouble studied

The possibility of birth control pills affecting the inner ear, causing dizziness, may be determined after a study of female squirrel monkeys to be given oral contraceptives at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta.

A Deafness Research Foundation research grant of \$7,000 recently given to Emory will be used in this project as well as to continue development of a temporal bone bank laboratory.

## CIGARETTE FILTER

### Columbia University bows out

The pending patent of the Strickman cigarette filter will not be accepted by Columbia University, and patent rights have been turned over to a charitable foundation formed at the request of the inventor, Robert L. Strickman.

The first announcement of Columbia's change of opinion about the value of the filter, heralded last summer (SN: 7/29/67 p. 104) as superior to any filter now on the market, came from Senator Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce.

Dr. Ralph S. Halford, professor of chemistry and special assistant to President Grayson Kirk of Columbia, had completed a report on an extensive testing program and turned it over to the committee, which through its chairman states:

"... the filter is not as efficient in removing tar and nicotine as certain filters readily available to cigarette manufacturers, including some filters now in production."

## NUTRITION

### U.S. diets low in vitamins A and C

Almost one-tenth of American households with incomes of \$10,000 and over have poor diets, due to ignorance or indifference to food values.

Decreased use of milk and milk products, vegetables and fruits—the most important sources of calcium and ascorbic acid—was chiefly responsible for a decline in percentage of good diets, according to a survey by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A comparison of data obtained in the 1965 survey just reported to the results of a 1955 survey shows that only 50 percent of 1965 households had good diets whereas 60 percent of the earlier groups surveyed fulfilled the requirements.

The survey was planned and the data analyzed by the Agricultural Research Service. Urban families ate more dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables and citrus fruits, which provide more vitamins A and C. Farm families got more calcium, iron and thiamine because of greater use of milk, cheese and grain products.

If the income was under \$3,000, more than a third of the diets were poor.

## CHOLERA TREATMENT

### Antibiotics stem the tide

Either tetracycline or chloramphenicol—a drug now heavily under attack because it is prescribed promiscuously—can stop an epidemic of cholera in its tracks—with 95 percent of the cases controlled within 48 hours, the World Health Organization reports.

Streptomycin is another antibiotic that is valuable although less effective. Poor countries are urged by WHO to use streptomycin if neither of the other two is available.

An international team reports in the WHO professional journal BULLETIN on excellent results achieved by antibiotic therapy. The study was conducted in Dacca, Pakistan, on 318 hospitalized adult patients.

WHO doctors in Geneva are heartened by the drug study because, despite the optimistic reports on experimental vaccines in the United States, they do not believe vaccines provide the real solution to cholera.

## POLLUTION

### Bad air causes accidents

Air pollution in some cities is so bad it is cutting the oxygen content of drivers' blood and causing automobile accidents, experts from the American Meteorological Society report in the Feb. 26 issue of the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

A California physician says automobiles, factories and power plants are receiving the air they need but man is not. Already there is statistical evidence of an increase in traffic accidents in Los Angeles during certain months when measured pollution levels are relatively high.

Clinical laboratory studies indicate that in some traffic situations, the amount and duration of carbon monoxide exposure is enough to substitute the gas for some of the oxygen normally carried in the blood, Dr. John R. Goldsmith says. "Added to carbon monoxide exposure from cigarette smoking, this is enough to impair judgment of time and distance in driving."

Dr. Goldsmith is chief of environmental hazards evaluation for California's Department of Public Health.