

committee and medical adviser for the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation.

The pilot study compared 29 children who developed Reye's syndrome following chicken pox or flu with 143 similar children who did not. Ninety-six percent of the children who developed Reye's syndrome had been given aspirin, compared with 45 percent of control group children. Sidney Wolfe, director of the Public Citizen Health Research Group, calls the results "one of the largest risk ratios found in any recent epidemiological study."

Some believe that release of the pilot study's results may complicate implementation of the full study. "It is ironic that with all the publicity that's out, it may not be possible to conduct the full study because we may not be able to get enough kids who have taken aspirin," Thaler said.

Use of aspirin by young children has declined in recent years, possibly accounting for a lower incidence of Reye's syndrome during 1984, according to the Jan. 11 MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REPORT. There were 190 cases of Reye's syndrome in the United States last year, down from 548 in 1980.

Although a mechanism explaining aspirin's role in the development of Reye's syndrome has not been worked out, Thaler cautions that it may not be a cause-and-effect relationship. Aspirin, he says, may merely exacerbate Reye's syndrome in children who already have the disease.

— D. D. Bennett

Star Wars defense: Is it legal?

It is widely held that a major factor fostering the Soviets' willingness to meet with Secretary of State George P. Schultz in Geneva, Switzerland, last week, to resume discussion of arms controls, was their concern over President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Also known as the "Star Wars" program (SN: 7/14/84, p. 26), SDI aims at developing a defense against incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The Soviets have repeatedly denounced SDI as being militarily destabilizing. Lately, U.S. critics have begun charging that, besides threatening to accelerate the arms race, SDI is illegal. Together, these charges are catalyzing a whole new round of debate over the future of space weapons development.

The Geneva talks resulted in SDI being made a bargaining chip for future arms negotiations. In fact, one of the three sets of negotiations agreed to by Schultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko will focus exclusively on space weapons. In a Jan. 14 interview on Soviet television, Gromyko made it known what his government's gambit will be: Unless the United States abandons SDI as part of some space weapons accord, Gromyko said, talks on strategic and intermediate-

range nuclear weapons will be in jeopardy.

SDI's legality was challenged in the leadoff discussion at a space weapons symposium in Washington, D.C., last Saturday sponsored jointly by the Pasadena, Calif.-based Planetary Society and the Cambridge, Mass.-based American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Explained Harvard Law School treaty expert Abram Chayes, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 "is the only arms control treaty in full force and effect between the superpowers." That treaty prohibits signatories from deploying ABM systems — or their components — for the defense of their lands. "So we start with the notion that the stated goal of the [SDI] — to provide [an ABM] defense of the country — is presently illegal under the treaty," Chayes said.

Secondly, he notes, Article 6 of the treaty prohibits giving any missile except a designated ABM interceptor the ability to counter ICBMs or their elements in flight. Yet in a recent U.S. Homing Overlay Experiment (HOE), he says, a modified Minuteman-1 ICBM was successfully used to intercept an incoming Minuteman. Since the interceptor was an ICBM, Chayes says, HOE violated Article 6 by giving ABM capabilities to a non-ABM missile.

Finally, he charges that since the treaty rules out development, testing and deployment of anything but a fixed, land-based system at one designated site in each country, SDI is bound to violate the treaty in other areas soon if it hasn't already. Though the treaty permits research on anything — even the proscribed sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based ABM systems — Chayes asks, "How far do you have to get out of the lab

for it to stop being research?" Similarly, he asks when a part will become so integral as to become an outlawed "component." To claim it isn't violating the treaty, he says, the U.S. exploits ambiguities in the treaty's language.

Arms control consultant Sidney Graybeal of Arlington, Va., who helped negotiate the ABM treaty, was also at the symposium. He challenged many of Chayes's assertions. While acknowledging that the goal of SDI is inconsistent with the treaty, Graybeal points out that "there's nothing in the ABM treaty that limits goals," just certain specified activities. Regarding HOE, he notes that it involved a fixed, land-based system at a designated test range, Kwajalein Island — all perfectly legal. However, he says, the administration may have made a tactical error by calling its Minuteman interceptor a Minuteman, instead of just a test vehicle. "Technically, if the administration calls it a Minuteman 1," he told SCIENCE NEWS, and if it ever gets deployed, "we will have violated the treaty's Article 6."

But the technicality is "a gray point," and certainly not an important potential violation if it is one at all, Graybeal believes. Chayes notes that the Soviets probably have their own infractions to play down — such as the radar being constructed in Siberia that, owing to its location and orientation, seems to be an "early warning" radar that could be useful for ABM battle management.

What most worries SDI's critics and supporters alike is that if the program isn't violating the ABM treaty yet, it probably will soon — as research on space weapons matures into the field-testing phase.

— J. Raloff

Reagan names 3 for cabinet vacancies

President Reagan nominated three new cabinet-level secretaries last week. Energy Secretary Donald P. Hodel would succeed William P. Clark as secretary of the interior. John S. Herrington, now White House personnel director, would take Hodel's place at the Energy Department. And William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, would take over the top Education Department post. Former Education Secretary Terrel Bell vacated his post last December. All three nominations are expected to win Senate confirmation.

Hodel, best known of the three, served as undersecretary of the interior for two years under Clark's predecessor, James Watt. Hodel is considered an advocate of energy resource development, both on federal lands and offshore. Prior to joining the Interior Department, Hodel, a lawyer, headed the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland, Ore., and his own energy consulting firm.

Herrington, also a lawyer, is described by the White House as a "longtime member of the Reagan team," who, as a management specialist, "brings to the Energy Department a combination of the knowledge of defense and civil management and organization."

Bennett is a back-to-basics, back-to-classics advocate. He has gone on record saying that Greco-Roman and European history, philosophy and literature should be the foundation of American education. Last year he raised the ire of some groups for eschewing federal quotas or goals on the number of women and minorities to be employed by the National Endowment. Bennett explained that his approach advocates that affirmative action be "color blind," not "color conscious." He also supports merit pay and competency tests for teachers.

The President has asked that each nominee, once he is installed in his new post, assess how his agency might be reorganized.

— J. Raloff