

# Medical Sciences Notes

## ARTHRITIS

### **Infectious Arthritis Clue Seen**

A clue to treatment, as well as diagnosis of arthritis, which is estimated to affect some 12 million people in the United States, is seen in continued research on organisms that have caused the disease in animals.

Dr. K. F. Meyer of San Francisco, who since 1931 has been doing research on bedsonia organisms, a distinct biologic group of intracellular agents responsible for diverse infections in birds, cats, opossums, cattle, sheep and goats, is now heading a research team under a grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. All bedsonia organisms are susceptible to some antibiotics, and if proved to exist in human arthritics could be attacked by drugs. Dr. Meyer says another scientist, in Finland, has isolated bedsonia from a rheumatic joint.

Aiding Dr. Meyer's group will be Dr. Ephraim P. Engleman of the University of California joint clinic, who will provide clinical material for arthritis research. Dr. Engleman is working under a grant from the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases.

## LUNG CANCER

### **Lung Surgery Survival Studied**

If a patient is going to die after surgery for lung cancer he is most likely to do so in the period immediately following the operation, a meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians in Las Vegas was told.

Dr. George A. Higgins, chief surgeon at the Washington, D.C., Veterans Administration Hospital, reported findings of a study group reviewing data from 23 hospitals.

Among 933 men patients, the average death rate per 100 men per month was 15.5 percent in the first post-operative month. The rate declined to 3.1 percent at two to 18 months, 1.8 percent at 19 to 36 months and 1.2 percent at 37 to 60 months after surgery.

Of the total 933 men, 330 were alive three years after surgery and 268 of these were believed free of cancer.

## INFANT DEATHS

### **Survival Predicted for Premies**

Chances of survival for premature babies with respiratory distress, called hyaline membrane disease, are being predicted by a group of four researchers at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. The disease is the one responsible for the death in 1963 of the infant son of the late President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

A study of 115 such infants, of whom only 33 died, shows that "weighting" factors were present, pointing to either life or death. And some of these other, possibly reversible, factors might have been the cause of death in some cases.

Arterial-blood oxygen tension while the infant is breathing 100 percent oxygen is the best single index of survival, with birth weight, respiratory rate, potassium and hydrogen concentration, or acidity balance, playing their part.

Dr. Mildred T. Stahlman headed the research, done at the departments of pediatrics, medicine and physiology of the university's School of Medicine. Grants from

the U.S. Public Health Service supported the work, on which Drs. Edward J. Battersby, Frank M. Shepard and Willard J. Blankenship collaborated.

## IMMUNOLOGY

### **Protection Seen in Vaccine**

Dengue fever vaccine has been tried out on U.S. troops with promising results, Dr. Charles L. Wisseman Jr., head of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Maryland reports.

Caused by a virus and transmitted by the bite of mosquitoes, the disease is marked by severe pain and is sometimes called breakbone fever.

The largest trial of the vaccine was conducted in Puerto Rico during a 1963 outbreak, when about 600 high school boys were vaccinated and compared with an equal number of controls.

The disease is common in the tropical Americas, in India and New Guinea, in addition to Vietnam. The vaccine was developed over 10 years of laboratory work with animal tests included. Human trials have been on volunteers. One of four strains taken from an epidemic in Hawaii is believed safest and most effective.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

### **Product Hazards Hit**

Poorly designed television sets, radios, coffee pots, blenders, wash tubs, lawn mowers and even children's toys have been known to burn, cut and poison scores of people. A pair of Senators looking for a way to keep ordinary household products from turning into lethal weapons have called upon Congress to establish a National Commission of Product Safety. They are calling for a study rather than specific regulations because there is not yet enough accumulated data to support new laws.

Senators Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.) and Norris Cotton (R-N.H.) introduced similar legislation last year. It passed the Senate but died in the House where it was dropped as a rider to the successful Child Protection Act of 1965. Passage is expected this year, however; the bill has White House backing.

Senator Magnuson is also sponsoring the Flammable Fabrics Act which is aimed at setting standards for fireproofing all materials commonly used by the public. This act calls for regulations, not investigation, and would include specifications for the manufacture of everything from paper dresses to the upholstery of airplane seats.

## CANCER VACCINE

### **Court Curbs Cancer Vaccine**

Production of the controversial Rand cancer vaccine (SN:2/11; p. 142) has been temporarily halted by a 10-day injunction issued last week by a U.S. Federal court. A hearing is scheduled this week at which the Government will ask that the injunction be made permanent on grounds that the vaccine is impure because of low grade manufacturing procedures. Bacterial contaminants were found in samples seized by the Food and Drug Administration recently.