Common Chemical Seasickness Remedy

Medicine

Seasickness may cease to be the voyager's bugbear if experiments of Drs. J. Frank Pearcy and Daniel Hayden of Chicago are substantiated by further tests.

The possibilities of the new remedy came to light when the doctors were making experiments to determine the depressant effect of the common drug, sodium nitrite, on the mechanism of the middle ear that controls the balancing of the human body, they stated in a report of their work to the American Medical Association.

"Believing that seasickness is due mostly, if not completely," they explained, "to overstimulation of the vestibule (of the middle ear), we felt that the nitrites offered a direct attack a the long-sought but never attained cure for the terrible malady of the ocean voyage."

So when Dr. Hayden was about to take a trip abroad he sought to put his theory to the test, but none of the passengers on the trip going over the Atlantic accommodated by becoming ill. On the return voyage, however, he had better luck. Sixteen succumbed and were divided into two groups of eight each, one of which received the nitrite treatment while the others were kept under observation as controls. Every attempt was made to have patients with equally acute symptoms in each group.

The controls were prostrated for about two days, but the others who received from three to five grains of sodium nitrite every two hours until they were relieved were comfortable on deck and able to eat meals in four hours. There was no recurrence of symptoms.

"Although the work has a sound experimental basis," they declared, "the actual tests having been adequately controlled and 100 per cent. cures obtained, we expect to use nitrites in a much greater series before drawing final conclusions. We are certain that they will cure many cases of seasickness but it is possible that there are cases that will not be cured."

Sodium nitrite is a common chemical, which comes as white sticks or granules. It has long been used by physicians in the treatment of angina pectoris, dropsy and several other diseases. It should not be experimented with, however, except under professional advice and supervision.

Science News-Letter, April 28, 1928

A Pantheon of Science

General Science

The Building of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council, which is also the home of Science Service, has been the scene during the past week of the annual spring meeting of the National Academy, whose proceedings are reported elsewhere in this issue.

This building, which is one of the masterpieces of the architectural genius of the late Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, is universally acknowledged to be a creation of unique beauty in Washington, which is a city of beautiful structures. In its general outline it is simple as its austere and majestic neighbor, the Lincoln Memorial; but when one comes to look at it more nearly and at leisure, one comes upon an endless fund of carefully wrought detail, every item bespeaking the combination of richness and deliberate restraint that is the mark of a well-tempered finely-edged civilization.

In addition to its functions of providing a fit setting for the meetings of the National Academy of Sciences and of housing the multifarious executive and editorial activities of the bodies that are its tenants, the building offers to the wayfaring man the hospitality of a museum of the latest scientific apparatus, so arranged and labeled that even the least learned can operate and understand each exhibit.

Science News-Letter, April 28, 1928

In This Issue—

SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER, The Weekly Summary of Current Science. Published by Science Service, Inc., the Institution for the Popularization of Science organized under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Edited by Watson Davis.

Publication Office, 1918 Harford Ave., Baltimore, Md. Editorial and Executive Office, 21st and B Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C. Address all communications to Washington, D. C. Cable address: Scienserve, Washington.

Entered as second class matter October 1, 1926, at the postoffice at Baltimore, Md., under the act of March 3, 1879. Established in mimeographed form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trade-mark, U. S. Patent Office.

Subscription rate—$5.00 a year postpaid. 15 cents a copy. Ten or more copies to same address, 5 cents a copy. Special reduced subscription rates are available to members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Advertising rates furnished on application.

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