

## PSYCHIATRY

# "Eye Jerk" Permits Quick Diagnosis of Dementia Precox

## Organic Reflex Test Also Shows Progress of Patient; First Physiological Means of Distinguishing Condition

DISCOVERY for the first time of an organic reflex test for the dreaded mental sickness, dementia precox or schizophrenia, was announced by Drs. Andras Angyal and Nathan Blackman, of Worcester, Mass., State Hospital, at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Cincinnati.

The test is an "eye jerk" test, something like the knee jerk test for syphilitic brain and nervous system disease. It is made by washing out the patient's ear with water. Following the washing, one gets "eye jerks," technically termed nystagmus, Dr. Blackman explained. The rate or speed of the "eye jerks" gives the doctor a means of diagnosing the condition, because in patients with schizophrenia, the eye jerks are much slower than those he has found in normal persons.

The eye jerk test is not only useful for diagnosis but also helps to show whether or not the patient is improving or getting worse and what effect treatment is having.

More than this, it is the first marked physical difference ever discovered between schizophrenic patients and normal persons. For years doctors have tested the blood pressure, heart rate and breathing of these patients and examined the chemical composition of their blood and made other similar studies in largely unsuccessful efforts to find a physical change corresponding to the change in their mental condition from the normal.

The differences have been so slight as to appear barely significant. But the eye jerk test shows a real difference.

"Most important," said Dr. Blackman in explaining the test, "we are a step nearer to knowing what really goes wrong in the brain when a perfectly normal individual goes insane."

The patient's reaction to the eye jerk test is even more marked when certain drugs are given before the test. Carbon dioxide and alcohol increase the eye jerks in the patients, but slow them down in normal persons. The reason for this difference has not yet been determined.

A suggested explanation is that in schizophrenia there may be a disturbed integration between the higher and lower brain functions.

*Science News Letter, June 8, 1940*

## MEDICINE

## Lame Children Walk Again After Vitamin Treatment

THE MIRACLE of making little children walk again when wasted, useless muscles had apparently doomed them to life in a wheel chair has been accomplished in five cases by treatment with vitamins E and B. Details of the cases are reported by Dr. Simon Stone, Manchester, N. H. (*Journal, American Medical Association, June 1*)

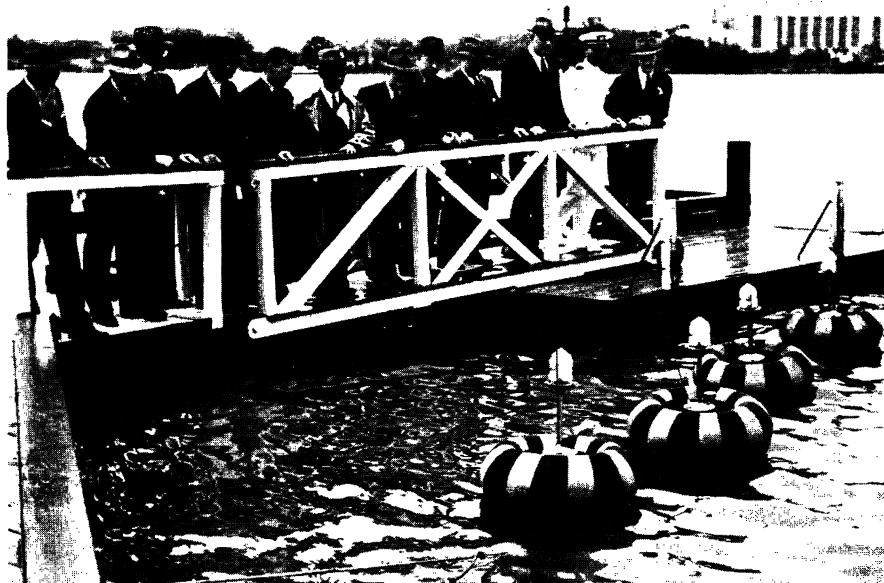
One of these children was an infantile paralysis victim. Wasted muscles and

pain in both legs made it impossible for this nine-year-old girl to stand alone or to rise from a lying to a sitting position. After she was helped to her feet she could walk, but with unsteady painful gait. Vitamin B—all members of the group—banished the pain and enabled her to walk without support. But her muscles remained wasted. When vitamin E, in the form of wheat germ oil, was added to the vitamin B treatment, her muscles were restored to nearly normal usefulness within one month, her limp greatly improved, and no sign of muscle wasting could be detected.

The other four children, similarly or worse disabled because of muscle wasting due to conditions other than infantile paralysis, gained muscle strength following the vitamin treatment, lost the fatigue and muscle pain they had felt on slight exertion, the texture of their muscles changed, and their wasted muscles were replaced by normally contracting muscle tissue.

*Science News Letter, June 8, 1940*

Women are no more susceptible to X-ray burns than men, says a Los Angeles dentist—but women sometimes fail to remove cosmetics containing lead, mercury, or heavy mineral salts and these absorb the X-rays and permit the skin to burn more quickly.



### DOUGHNUT LIGHTS

Any harbor, lake or river area can be turned into a seadrome with the aid of these radio controlled lights strung in landing lanes. The fluorescent lights are operated by batteries and are turned on and off by short wave shore stations.