

PUBLIC HEALTH

D. C. Health Officer Institutes Special Measures

"Immunological Inventory" Will Be Conducted to Find Whether New Arrivals Are Vaccinated, Inoculated

SPECIAL measures to fight epidemics and keep the nation's fast-growing Capital healthy during war have been instituted by Dr. George C. Ruhland, District of Columbia Health Officer.

A door-to-door health census of all new arrivals will be made as soon as the necessary staff can be recruited. Object of this health census, which Dr. Ruhland calls an "immunological inventory," is to determine whether the new arrivals have been vaccinated against smallpox and given inoculations against typhoid fever and whether their children have had toxoid to protect them against diphtheria. Those who have not had these health-protective measures will be urged to get them at once.

The city has remained healthy and free from epidemics so far. Air raid destruction of water supply and sewage disposal systems, however, is seen as a possible source of great, if temporary, danger. Because of this possibility, the District of Columbia Medical Society, acting on Dr. Ruhland's instigation, has warned everyone in the National Capital to be immunized against typhoid fever. The entire staff of several departments of the District of Columbia Government and key persons in national Government departments have already been immunized against typhoid fever.

The District of Columbia health department, with the U. S. Public Health Service, is conducting a survey of mosquitoes in Washington and the vicinity. One variety of mosquito that can carry malaria has been found in nearby Oxon Run, Md. With the increase in air travel between Washington and the South has come increased danger that malaria-infected passengers or mosquitoes might introduce the disease to this city. First step in fighting this possible danger is the survey to determine the number and location of any mosquitoes capable of carrying the malaria parasites, following which, breeding places will be treated with oil or cleared.

The new budget for the local health department has allowed Dr. Ruhland

to increase greatly his staff of sanitary inspectors. The new positions are largely being filled with women who, Dr. Ruhland thinks, are better fitted for the job of inspecting boarding and rooming houses to see that they meet health department sanitary requirements.

Outstanding triumph in Dr. Ruhland's efforts to control venereal diseases has been the Police Court conviction and sentence, for the first time in D. C., of a

prostitute for failure to take the treatment that would prevent her spreading venereal disease. The health department's policy in this connection, Dr. Ruhland emphasized, is not to be known as a police agency. It is interested only in keeping out of circulation those who can spread disease.

The health department has been able to maintain the purity of both the water and milk supplies, in spite of the tremendous growth of the population and consequently increased demand. Because nearby Army camps are diverting thousands of gallons of milk daily from the Washington supply, Dr. Ruhland has had to allow local dairies to make up the deficit for residents by importing milk from inspected sources in Pennsylvania which are normally outside the Washington milk shed.

Science News Letter, July 18, 1942

PHYSIOLOGY

Hypnotically Drugged Troops May Be Next Development

HYPNOTICALLY drugged troops may be the next development in military strategy, it is hinted in medical publications in London just received in the United States.

"If a drug could be found that would facilitate the association of ideas and thereby increase initiative without impairing judgment, abolish fatigue and the desire for sleep for about 48 hours, and yet produce no harmful effects such as incoordination that might impair accuracy in shooting, the discovery would go far towards completing the revolution that we are seeing in military strategy," declares the editor of the *Lancet*.

"In war a reduction in fear, if it can be attained without too great a sacrifice of mental efficiency, is often as useful as intellectual stimulation," he continues, calling attention to a report in the same issue of the *Lancet* of investigations on sodium amylal.

This drug is familiar to many as a sleeping medicine. Its ability to banish apprehension and calm the mind is well known to patients who have been given it before being wheeled to the operating room. Doctors call it a hypnotic drug. It was used successfully to calm anxious patients during air raids on London.

Intelligence tests on nearly 400 men showed that in doses of one to three

grains it "produces relative mental calm for some four hours without, apparently, more than slight impairment of mental powers." The impairment was a drop of three or four points in I.Q. which the investigators state "does not represent an appreciable decline in mental efficiency."

The tests were reported from an Emergency Medical Service Neurological Unit by Dr. Patrick Slater, statistical psychologist to the War Office, Dr. William Sargent, psychiatric specialist to the EMS, and Miss Margaret Glen, technical assistant.

The Germans are reported to have used various pep pills as mental stimulants for their shock troops, among them amphetamine sulfate, also called benzedrine sulfate and a newer drug, known as Pervitin in Germany and as Methedrine in England. These have both been disappointing, it appears from the *Lancet* editor's comments. Amphetamine was not sufficiently powerful as a brain stimulant for soldiers, he says, besides having other disadvantages.

Pervitin has similar unpleasant effects and experiments suggest that it is too stimulating. It speeds up association of ideas faster than the executive part of the brain can cope with the new ideas.

Science News Letter, July 18, 1942