

MEDICINE

"Shipyard Eye" Research

Virus believed cause of highly contagious disease. Sulfa drug is called almost specific remedy. Several research studies conducted.

► THE LATEST developments in the "shipyard eye" situation are:

1. The cause of the disease, which has been striking in epidemic form at industrial as well as shipyard workers on the East and West Coasts, has been fairly clearly identified as a virus through studies by two groups of medical researchers.

2. Sulfathiazole has been reported as an "almost specific" remedy.

3. Doctors, nurses and first aiders in Detroit, and probably other industrial areas, have been warned to be on guard, taking extra precautions against getting the disease themselves or spreading it to others when treating patients having or suspected of having the disease. In Detroit the Board of Health is requiring that all cases be reported to it.

In 125 cases studied at the University

of California Medical School in San Francisco, undernourishment, occupation and disease germs of the bacteria, that is, non-virus type, were ruled out as possible causes, Dr. Michael J. Hogan and Dr. Joseph W. Crawford report.

A filterable virus has actually been isolated from patients having the disease by Dr. Murray Sanders and Dr. R. C. Alexander, of Columbia University, in New York. Their studies were carried on in "informal collaboration with the Commission on Neurotropic Virus Diseases, Board for the Investigation and Control of Influenza and Other Epidemic Diseases in the United States Army".

The virus they isolated caused "shipyard eye" when rubbed in the eye of a healthy young man who volunteered for the test. Blood from convalescent pa-

tients in New York and California neutralized this virus. The virus was shown to be different from other disease viruses by further neutralization tests and by difference in size as measured by the bore of the filter through which it could pass. These studies by the New York investigators were reported in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine* (Jan.).

Successful use of a 4% or 5% solution of sodium sulfathiazole sesquihydrate in treating cases of "shipyard eye" at the County Hospital in San Diego, Calif., was reported by Dr. F. J. Walter to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. If further trial shows that this is, as Dr. Walter calls it, "almost specific" as a remedy for the condition, it will be one of the few instances in which a sulfa drug has succeeded as a remedy for a virus-caused condition.

"Shipyard eye", known medically as kerato-conjunctivitis, is highly contagious, according to a report from the Wayne County, Mich., Medical Society. About 5 out of every 100 exposed persons develop the disease. In spite of its popular name and its outbreaks among industrial workers, the highest infection rate in a recent epidemic was among the doctors and nurses in the affected industry.

Science News Letter, February 20, 1943



ARCTIC HOME—This portable shelter has been developed for use by Army Corps personnel in cold climates. Blankets of glass fiber insulation in walls and floor save more than 20,000 pounds in the weight of fuel needed to maintain a comfortable living temperature during the heating season. The shelters are lightweight and compact for transportation by plane.

RESOURCES

Shoe Rationing Encourages Use of Leather Substitutes

► LEATHER-LESS shoes may soon be on the market as one of the results of the new shoe-rationing order. A laminated duck fabric with a plastic binder has already been developed for outer soles and is testing out quite satisfactorily. A composition mid-sole is in more or less general use. A plastic inner sole is a reasonable possibility. Cloth uppers have long been used, and a new woven plastic gives promises.

Put the laminated fabric outsole, the composition mid-sole, the plastic inner-sole, and the woven upper together and you will have a leather-less shoe which will probably be ration-free.

Manufacturers are particularly concerned with a satisfactory outer-sole substitute, as the principal shortage seems to be in sole leather. A semi-flexible plywood is being tried. A shoe with an inch-thick hinged wood sole is understood to be now offered to farmers and other workmen. The hinge is under the ball of the foot so that the wearer may walk naturally.

To many men, three pairs of shoes