MEDICINE

New Wound Antiseptic

Propamidine applied in a jelly to infected burns or flesh wounds kills germs within 10 days. After that wounds rapidly heal.

➤ A NEW wound antiseptic, which kills the germs in infected wounds within 10 days and is also good for burns, has appeared on the medical scene. Its name is propamidine. Summarizing English reports of work with the new wound antiseptic, the editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, published in Boston, points out that the new chemical does not have its anti-germ activity checked by p-aminobenzoic acid, as the sulfa drugs may, nor by peptones, tissue fluids or pus.

The method of using the chemical, as worked out by trial on patients with osteomyelitis, infected burns and infected flesh wounds, is to clean the wound with physiologic salt solution, cut if necessary to expose all infected parts of the wound to the chemical, apply the propamidine in a jelly and seal over with vaseline gauze. Similar dressing and treatment of the wound is given on alternate days for a total of five treatments.

In a trial on five patients with infected ulcers and casualty wounds and eight with burns at an Emergency Medical Service Hospital, the infected wounds and ulcers were germ-free or nearly so in four to 10 days and thereafter rapidly healed or were successfully grafted. The burned patients were relieved of pain, second-degree burned areas healed within 10 days and infection did not occur. Patients with infected wounds and burns that had not responded to sulfanilamide or certain other methods of treatment were also helped by propamidine.

"It is to be hoped," the medical editor states, "that further trial of propamidine will confirm these encouraging reports."

He warns against using the drug in large wounds or in patients with impending shock until further experience has been gained with it. Injection of the chemical into the veins of mice failed to check streptococcus infection and this method of using the drug may be dangerous, judging from a report of such use for sleeping sickness.

Science News Letter, April 17, 1943

PUBLIC HEALTH

Insect War Being Won

The 45-year war against the malaria mosquito approaching victory in India, the land where this insect was first demonstrated to be carrier.

➤ THE 45-YEAR fight against the malaria mosquito is being won in India, the land where the mosquito's deadly role as malaria carrier was first demonstrated by Sir Ronald Ross, of the Indian Medical Service, Raymond B. Fosdick, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, announced in his review of the Foundation's activities in 1942.

American soldiers fighting in malaria-ridden tropics, as well as millions of civilians, are benefitting from this discovery of an effective weapon against the malaria mosquito.

The weapon, known as the "sweet mist" in the Indian village where its success in controlling malaria was shown, is a pyrethrum spray. This spray, harmless to humans, is deadly to mosquitoes and many other insects, as American householders well know.

The idea that it would prove effective in thatched huts with open eaves and often no walls, which are the homes of the rural population in South India, seemed fantastic to the Rockefeller scientists before they tried it. To their amazement, however, a standardized technic for systematic spraying of every hut and other building proved "remarkably effective" in stopping the spread of malaria. It was possible, moreover, to bring the cost down so low that even impoverished districts can afford this health protection.

The fact that the spray could banish malaria mosquitoes from huts of open construction suggested that it might also prove effective in tents and shelters used by troops in malaria regions. The apparatus required has consequently now been added to U. S. Army equipment.

None of our soldiers or sailors needs to be a victim of that other "savage" mosquito-borne disease, yellow fever, as a result of the discovery in the Rockefeller laboratories, of a successful vaccine against the disease, Mr. Fosdick stated.

An outbreak of jaundice in 1942, "which appeared to be associated with certain definite lots of the yellow fever vaccine," resulted in a change in the method of making the vaccine.

"It is believed that the risk of jaundice has been definitely eliminated," Mr. Fosdick declared.

Jaundice, meantime, has now become a prime objective for research by Rockefeller scientists "in the hope of clarifying the many hidden factors in this relatively obscure disease. The scope of the work will include a study of jaundice as it occurs in the general population as well as in groups which have received injections of serum-containing substances."

Mass vaccinations of civilian populations to protect them from yellow fever and search for a more effective remedy for malaria have been other Rockefeller activities during the past year.

Science News Letter, April 17, 1943

TO BATTLE GAS—This sailor is ready to enter a fight against poison gas and to remove it from any contaminated object without harm to himself. This is an official U. S. Navy photograph.