

PUBLIC HEALTH

Spreading Paralysis?

Mystery of how infantile paralysis spreads still unsolved, though sewage, flies and mucous droplets are all under suspicion.

► THE MYSTERY of how infantile paralysis spreads has not yet been solved, although sewage, flies and mucous droplets on human breath are all more or less under suspicion, Dr. Howard A. Howe, of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, told members of the Federation of Sewage Works Associations meeting in Chicago at a war-time conference on sanitation.

Dr. Howe summed up the views on the subject of both himself and his associate at the Hopkins Poliomyelitis Research Center, Dr. Kenneth F. Maxcy, who is now out of the country.

The case for spread via sewage rests on two facts: 1. The virus of the disease has repeatedly been found in intestinal wastes from patients and healthy carriers. 2. The virus has on several occasions been found in city sewage when cases of the disease were at a maximum.

Attempts to determine whether chlorination of water is effective in destroying the virus in water supplies that might become contaminated have been inconclusive, Dr. Howe said, because the experiments have not duplicated actual

conditions closely enough.

Chief reason why epidemiologists do not believe that infantile paralysis is spread by contaminated water is that the epidemics do not behave like epidemics of other water-borne diseases such as typhoid fever. The disease has never been correlated with poor water supplies nor have explosive outbreaks of widely scattered cases occurred in cities with municipal water systems. This would be expected if the virus were spread through the water mains.

Flies can carry the virus of infantile paralysis, but it seems unlikely that they play much part in spreading the disease. They are not, for one thing, invariably associated with the disease. The disease, moreover, chiefly attacks children, which would not be the case if it were spread primarily by flies or other insects.

The virus is also found in the walls and secretions of the pharynx, in the throat, which suggests the possibility that it may be spread from one person to another by droplets of mucous from the pharynx.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Noise Remedies

Public needs to be convinced that noise is unnecessary. Suggestions given on how to reduce the amount of noise in industry and everyday life.

► IF NOISE gets on your nerves, a few things that you can do about it are suggested in a report by Dr. Carey P. McCord and John D. Goodell of Detroit. (*Journal, American Medical Association, Oct. 23*)

If the loud ticks of a watch on a tabletop keep you awake, hang it up and you may be unable to hear it. The principle involved is that the tabletop acts as a sounding board and amplifies the noise of the watch.

The public needs to be convinced that noise is unnecessary, the report states, Many law-abiding citizens, the report recites, who under no circumstances would

contemplate the sending up of a rocket flare on a public street, or turning a flood light on an apartment house to attract the attention of a friend, will unhesitatingly blanket a house or an entire block with resounding noise from a badly designed automobile horn.

Automobiles should have horns that do not frighten people with shrieking noise, the report suggests. Just as it is possible to train a dog to wag his tail when he hears a pleasant word, so human beings could be educated to respond to a simple non-irritating sound as a danger warning. Use of a mellow horn on modern diesel locomotives instead of

the shrill steam whistle of past years was cited as such an advance.

Sound reduction and air conditioning are closely allied as in the modern air-conditioned trains and buildings. By eliminating the necessity for open windows for ventilation, it is possible to exclude almost all exterior noise.

Relatively quiet operations or devices may be substituted for those causing noise in some cases. Examples are: Use of welding instead of riveting in building, replacing light signals for telephone bells and other noisy devices intended to attract attention.

Installation of acoustic material on the walls or elsewhere, such as the increased use of carpets, wall hangings and drapes, is also useful in noise control.

These and further measures were suggested in the report of American Medical Association's Committee to Study Air Conditioning for the purpose of showing that much current noise is needless; that effort against noise is a widely neglected but legitimate portion of overall warfare; that methods of noise control are practical and no longer technically mysterious; and behind some of the more publicized evils of the day, such as wilful absenteeism, may be found the insidious disturbances from noise.

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ASTRONOMY

Comet Rediscovered As Predicted in 1935

► COMET COMAS-SOLA, last seen in 1935, has been rediscovered. Miss L. Oterma, Finnish woman astronomer, on Oct. 2 located it in the constellation of Cetus, near where it had been predicted that the comet would reappear.

Harvard College Observatory, clearing house for astronomical information, received this report in radio message relayed through Sweden.

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