

PUBLIC HEALTH

Syphilis Is Long Fight

The idea of wiping out this disease in one generation is called a "pipe dream", even with penicillin. Control of gonorrhea is more hopeful.

► "PENICILLIN has proved a tremendous boon to both patients and physicians in the treatment of all stages of syphilis," Dr. Evan W. Thomas, of New York University College of Medicine, declared at the meeting of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association.

He warned, however, that in spite of penicillin or any new treatment that may be discovered, syphilis is not likely to be controlled through treatment alone.

"It is becoming more evident every day," he declared, "that the dream of eradicating syphilis in a generation is a pipe dream and little more than a pious hope, if we are dependent entirely upon effective methods of therapy alone.

"No disease yet has been controlled entirely by treatment," he pointed out, "and syphilis is far more complex and difficult to eradicate than most infectious diseases.

"Both the psychological and social factors which favor promiscuity and poor sexual hygiene require further investigation if we are to get at the roots of the spread of syphilis."

He urged fighting promiscuity with education and reasoned arguments and also urged giving the lay public continuous access to the best existing knowledge about syphilis.

A more hopeful view on control of another venereal disease, gonorrhea, was taken by Dr. Alfred Cohn, chief of the division of venereal disease research of the New York City Department of Health. Citing a cure rate of 98% with one type of penicillin treatment, and comparing various methods of using penicillin to treat gonorrhea, Dr. Cohn said:

"From the aforementioned data we may conclude that penicillin is an effective weapon for the control of gonococcal infections which when adequately and wisely used will help us to eradicate one of the great scourges of human-kind."

Penicillin does not have any beneficial effects in another venereal disease, lymphogranuloma venereum, sometimes known as tropical bubo, nor in granuloma inguinale, Dr. Borris A. Kornblith, of Gouverneur Hospital in New York, stated.

Current methods of treating the first of these diseases include sulfa drugs, Frei's antigen and in some cases surgery.

For granuloma inguinale, which is increasing in the southern United States, especially in the coastal areas, antimony drugs are used, sometimes with surgery. About one-fifth of the cases are not cleared up by antimony treatment and the sores remain open and infectious, which creates a serious public health problem.

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OCEANOGRAPHY

Seaweed Products Important in Industry

► SEAWEED gathering and processing is becoming an important American industry. It was stimulated during the war by shortages of seaweed products formerly obtained from Japan and other countries. The most-felt shortage was for one seaweed product, agar, used ex-

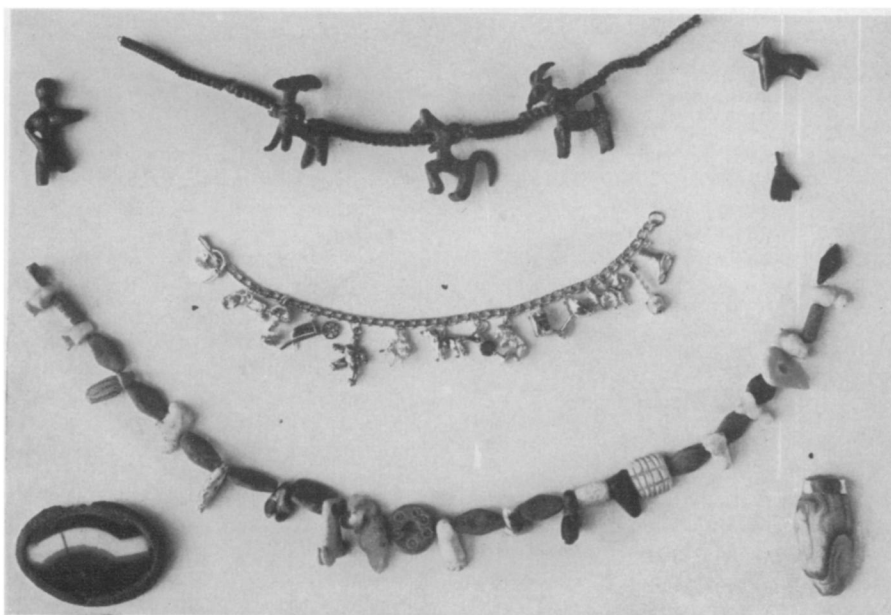
tensively by scientists in preparing solid bacteriological culture media, also in bakery products, medicines, health foods, and dental impression materials.

How World War II stimulated interest among some of the United Nations in developing greater seaweed resources was reviewed recently by Dr. C. K. Tseng of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. In 1940, he said, the United States had a single agar factory which produced 24,000 pounds annually; now there are four with a combined output of 200,000 pounds each year.

Another important derivative from seaweed, he said, is algin, which is used as an ice cream stabilizer. Dairy experts regard it as equal to gelatin for this purpose. Four American companies are making algin, and from 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 pounds of alginous products are produced annually.

A third important seaweed product, he continued, is carrageen, or Irish moss extract, now the standard suspending agent for cocoa particles in chocolate-milk preparations. Three companies are producing some 500,000 pounds of the extract annually, and others are processing carrageen.

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ANTIQUÉ CHARM BRACELETS—Ancient Persians around 1300 B. C. used bangle bracelets and necklaces, according to Richard A. Martin, curator of Near Eastern Archaeology of the Chicago Natural History Museum. Most of the charms are miniature horses, dogs, frogs, goats, animal heads, pots and human hands and feet—as odd and unrelated an assortment as young girls wear today. The picture of "costume jewelry" recently acquired by the museum shows some of the objects worn in ancient Persia as compared with a bangle bracelet (center) popular today.