

MEDICINE

'Flu Vaccination Advised

Results of Army experience show that it is very worthwhile. Ratio at one university of vaccinated to unvaccinated was one to nine.

► GET YOURSELF vaccinated against influenza next fall, especially if an epidemic seems brewing. This, in effect, is the advice, based on Army experience, given by Dr. Thomas Francis, Jr., and Dr. Jonas E. Salk of the University of Michigan School of Public Health, at the meeting of the American College of Physicians.

Everyone in the Army was vaccinated against influenza last fall by order of the Surgeon General. Groups of vaccinated Army students and unvaccinated students at two universities were studied during last winter's outbreak of the disease.

At one university, the Michigan doctors reported, the ratio of influenza cases among vaccinated and unvaccinated was one to nine. The rate of hospital admissions for respiratory disease, which might mean everything from bad colds to pneumonia and would include influenza, was 1.1% among 800 vaccinated and 9.9% among unvaccinated.

These figures, the doctors stated, reflect the general trend in the vaccinated Army as compared with other similar unvaccinated groups in the population.

Earlier studies with the vaccine showed that it may give protection for as long as a year.

"The problem for the future," the doctors pointed out, "is to devise means for enhancing and prolonging individual protection and to extend knowledge into the field for establishing the minimum requirements to prevent the epidemic phenomenon."

Vaccination of part of the population gives some protection even to the unvaccinated, they explained. This is because it reduces by the number protected by vaccination the number who might otherwise get the disease and pass it on. When scientists get some knowledge of how much the spread of influenza into epidemics can be checked by vaccination of part of the population, and by how large a proportion, it may not be necessary to take steps to protect every individual by vaccination.

"Until such time," they cautiously advised, "it would appear advisable to suggest that the protection of the individual should be practiced."

Some reactions to the influenza vaccinations occurred. They were about the same as those following shots against typhoid fever. More serious reactions may occur in persons allergic to egg protein, since the influenza is made from virus grown on chick embryos.

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tional Research Council which allocates streptomycin for civilian use is now getting about one-fourth the total production, the rest going to the Army, Navy Public Health Service, and Veterans Administration. This supply is about enough to treat 1,000 patients per month.

Present cost is \$15 for a thirtieth of an ounce but this is being paid by a grant from the manufacturers. Within the next month or six weeks CPA hopes to be able to allow commercial distribution of streptomycin for treatment of tularmia, influenzal meningitis and those urinary tract infections for which neither penicillin nor sulfa drugs are effective.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Safer Automobiles for Fewer Highway Accidents

► AS PRESIDENT TRUMAN keynoted his Highway Safety Conference with a warning against murder on the nation's roads, the Committee on Engineering opened its discussions with a preliminary report offering some ideas for safer automobiles.

The report urges modern, sealed-beam headlights, declaring, "about one-third of the vehicles met on the road have old-style headlighting in various stages of depreciation." Polarized headlights are called a "possibility" with more experimental work needed.

Direction signal lights on cars have not reached the stage of standard equipment, the report says, adding that modification of some highway laws will be necessary if they do. While there is no substitute for good driving in turning, the engineers report that signal lights seem to be a desirable safety measure.

Wartime synthetic rubber may continue in the tubes of your tires, because tubes made of butyl are safer than natural rubber. Tubes made of this synthetic maintain inflation pressures over much longer periods than do tubes made of the natural rubber product.

The report found shortcomings in some safety proposals. Governors on passenger automobiles, the engineers say, would be hazardous because they would prevent the driver from speeding out of trouble in some cases.

Even safety glass, praised for its shatterproof qualities, must be modified to save lives. Present safety glass in cars is so strong that fractured skulls are reported instead of cuts from flying glass.

Science News Letter, May 25, 1946

MEDICINE

Beef for Streptomycin

► THE MEAT SHORTAGE may be to blame in part for the short supply of streptomycin. In production of the drug, which is penicillin's potent ally in fighting germ diseases, a need for beef pancreas was cited specifically by Dr. Chester S. Keefer of Boston at the American College of Physicians meeting in Philadelphia.

Trypsin enzyme from beef pancreas is needed for the preparation of streptomycin from the crude brew of soil organisms which produce the drug. Beef pancreas, however, is also needed to produce insulin for diabetes. At present insulin has also a high priority on the pan-

creas supply because there is not any too much insulin, without which thousands of diabetics would die.

Streptomycin production is much more difficult than penicillin production and the yield per quantity of fluid is smaller; about ten times as much streptomycin by weight as penicillin is required to treat a patient. From one-thirtieth to one-eighth of an ounce of streptomycin is required daily in the average case. It must be given by injection every three to four hours. This also contributes to the difficulty in getting enough of the drug to treat all the patients who want it.

Dr. Keefer's committee of the Na-