

PUBLIC HEALTH

Warn of Germ Warfare

► SCHOOL AND office absentee records may well be where we will find out if an enemy has attacked with biological warfare. Public health officers from 30 states have wound up meetings in which this method of getting a quick check on the start of an epidemic was discussed.

The 161 participants met with representatives of the U. S. Public Health Service, the National Institutes of Health and the Civil Defense Administration at the government's Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Ga.

Quicker and more accurate methods of reporting both natural and man-made epidemics to those who have to control them will be recommended to the October meeting of the state public health officers' association. It is suggested that they go into effect at the beginning of next year.

MEDICINE

Airborne Disease Persists

► YOU ARE more likely to be infected if you are exposed to influenza virus if it is airborne than when the agents are in a liquid.

The influenza virus survives best in climates at about 60% relative humidity, which is within the normal range of most American cities.

When viruses attached to particles a hundred-millionth of an inch in diameter get into your body, they are likely to infect you whether the agent itself is very virulent or not.

But if the particles are larger than this, your body most likely will repel them, even though the agents are highly virulent.

These are some of the findings of research being carried on at the University of California with experimental tools which make it possible to study epidemics under controlled laboratory conditions.

These tools, developed during the last war in America's studies of defenses against bacteriological warfare, have been greatly improved since 1945. The work is being done by Naval Medical Research Unit No. 1, under a contract the University has with the Office of Naval Research. Director is Dr. A. P. Krueger, professor of bacteriology.

Despite a vast amount of research, most of man's information on epidemics is based on theories derived from qualitative rather than quantitative information.

With the present equipment, devoted primarily to airborne infection studies, it is possible not only to infect animals but to know just how many disease agents pass by an animal's nose in a germ cloud. Infection is achieved through an atomizer, which acts something like a hearty human sneeze;

Reports from schools, offices and factories as to rises in the usual absentee rate will enable public health officers to estimate the speed and extent of influenza and other epidemics. Control measures may then be taken.

It is believed that any disease used in biological warfare would not be a self-perpetuating type but would strike a lot of people suddenly. This method of reporting on the statistics of epidemics would make the extent of a BW attack known to the government in the quickest way possible.

"These new methods are necessary, not only for peacetime, but also for defense in wartime," said Dr. Alexander Langmuir, chief epidemiologist of the Communicable Disease Center.

Science News Letter, May 19, 1951

He added that "neurosis," "psychosis," and "psychoneurosis" have no scientific basis and that psychiatrists cannot agree among themselves as to what they mean.

Dr. Bowman commended a committee which has effected the elimination of the terms "mental deficiency" and "psychopathic personality" from a new issue of the STANDARD NOMENCLATURE OF DISEASES which will be published shortly. He said there is even more reason for eliminating "neurosis," "psychosis," and "psychoneurosis."

Science News Letter, May 19, 1951

MEDICINE

Hayfeverites Offered Long Lasting Antihistamine

► HAYFEVERITES this summer are offered a new antihistamine drug which is claimed to be better on two counts than others previously tried: 1. unusually long lasting effects, and 2. very low toxicity, or undesirable side effects.

A single dose keeps on relieving hay fever or hives for an average period of 19½ hours, Dr. W. A. Bain of England has reported. The drug makes about one out of five persons drowsy, but this becomes an advantage if the single dose for the 24 hours is taken at bedtime, since the drowsiness wears off before morning but the antihistamine effect lasts for a considerable part of the day.

The drug is a phenothiazine chemical. It is called Phenergan Hydrochloride by its manufacturers, Wyeth Incorporated of Philadelphia.

Science News Letter, May 19, 1951

PSYCHIATRY

Use Term "Mental Disorder" Instead of "Psychoneurosis"

► IF ONE of the nation's leading psychiatrists has his way, there won't be any more "neurosis," "psychosis," or "psychoneurosis."

No, he does not have a magic cure for mental illness. He simply wants to eliminate these words, which have become pretty much a part of household language, because he feels they have lost all meaning.

Instead, Dr. Karl Bowman, of the Langley Porter Clinic at the University of California School of Medicine, recommends the term "mental disorder" to classify all mental illnesses. Each of the three classes of mental disorder would be designated as to severity by the terms "mild," "moderate," or "severe."

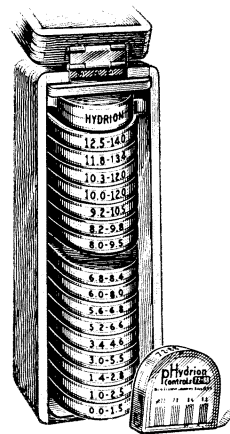
Dr. Bowman, who addressed the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Cincinnati, said that these designations would bring some order out of the confusion now surrounding definitions of mental conditions. The meaning of these classifications would be clear to all psychiatrists, he stated.

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