

PUBLIC HEALTH

Disease Threat in War

Real disease trouble maker if Korean conflict continues is likely to be schistosomiasis. May take role of typhoid, 'flu and malaria in previous wars.

► THE DISEASE likely to be a real trouble maker if the present conflict in Korea continues or is extended is schistosomiasis, Dr. L. T. Coggeshall, dean of biological sciences and medicine at the University of Chicago, declared at the meeting of the Society of American Bacteriologists in Chicago.

This disease, caused by a fluke and spread by snails, may take the roles played by typhoid fever in the Civil War, by influenza in World War I and by malaria in World War II, he suggested.

Unless treated early, the outlook for the patient is poor. Once the spleen and liver become enlarged, treatment usually has no effect and the patient dies of exhaustion or terminal infection.

The scanty, almost non-existent studies of the disease in Korea show that only the southern portion is involved, but "South

China is a hotbed of infection," Dr. Coggeshall declared.

The disease is caught by direct contact with the germs, known as cercaria, that have hatched from eggs deposited with feces, or intestinal wastes, in bush water. The intermediate host of the disease germ is the snail that normally lives in rice paddies, cultivated or abandoned.

During the last war about 2,000 cases occurred among American troops in the Philippines. The men got the infection during engineering work associated with water or while swimming and wading.

"In Korea," Dr. Coggeshall said, "we know that hordes of Chinese Communists with their known lack of even primitive sanitary measures must be depositing their infected feces in places where snails are really available."

Pointing to the conditions that make for effective spread, he said:

"Korean agriculture is primarily rice grown in water. The diked fields are flooded periodically, and the intermediate snail hosts are so widely dispersed. There is extensive use of human feces for fertilizer. The susceptible population will be available. Lack of roads and heavy fighting make it impossible to avoid infected water. Thus it seems we have all the prerequisites for trouble."

There are no vaccines against this disease and no satisfactory treatment, he continued. The cercaria can be destroyed by certain chemicals, particularly copper in water. But wide-scale use of these is difficult and impractical.

Dr. Coggeshall called for more studies of this potentially dangerous disease germ and also for more study of the dysenteries. Just because dysentery has always been a major war problem is no reason, he stressed, that it should be considered inevitable.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Link Culture of Atlantic and Pacific Sides of Panama

► POTTERY AND stone implements unearthed in Panama and just brought back to the U. S. point up a link between the ancient cultures of the Atlantic and Pacific sides of that country.

Mountains divide the tiny isthmus, the Atlantic side usually being soaked by Caribbean rains. The artifacts were brought back by Dr. Matthew W. Stirling, director of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology and head of Middle America surveys, under the joint auspices of the Institution and the National Geographic Society.

"There is probably no region in America which has been more completely unknown to archaeologists," stated Dr. Stirling. It was for this reason that he chose Panama's Atlantic drainage basin for exploration. The pottery and stone weapons collected at different sites along the rivers are of a primitive order, Dr. Stirling said, and that was as expected.

Bone and shell fragments, fairly common finds on the drier Pacific side of the divide, are absent, he found, from mounds on the wetter Atlantic side.

Dr. Robert Rands, specialist in Middle American archaeological lore, assisted Dr. Stirling as did his wife, Marion Stirling. Some of the pieces will go to the Smithsonian Institution, some to Panama's National Museum and others to museums on both sides of the Rio Grande.

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PRE-COLUMBIAN PICTOGRAPH—Mrs. Matthew W. Stirling, archaeologist wife of the leader of the Middle America surveys, studies one of the many pre-Columbian pictographs carved on two huge rock hillsides near La Pintada, village near the ridge of western Panama's mountain divide,

Sodium salt of trichloroacetic acid, TCA for short, is a successful chemical to use in the control of many perennial weedy grasses such as quackgrass, Johnson grass and Bermuda grass.