

## MEDICINE

## Clearer Thermometer

► NURSES IN hospitals may have one of their regular chores greatly lightened, thanks to four years of research by the National Bureau of Standards. No longer will the nurse have to squint and puzzle when she takes a patient's temperature because the color has worn off the marks of her thermometer.

A formula for a coloring that is much more durable than any marking compound now being used has been developed by the Bureau of Standards researchers. Chief ingredient of the new marking compound is a silicone resin. Bone black, normal butyl alcohol and toluene are the other ingredients.

Color markings on hospital thermometers have to withstand constant cleaning with tincture of green soap or some other soap or detergent and germicides such as carbolic acid. All the commercial marking compounds and many experimental ones failed in less than five months when tested

in one or more of 17 soap, detergent and germicide solutions. Only the silicone compound developed by the Bureau of Standards or a modification of it withstood all the solutions for the five-months period.

The Bureau has also developed two speeded-up service tests hospitals can use on thermometers they purchase. One is a 14-day exposure to a 5% carbolic acid solution with 24 removal periods. The other consists in soaking the thermometer for 14 days in a solution of tincture of green soap of a specified concentration. The thermometer is removed eight times during the 14 days for a washing routine.

Most thermometer colorings now in use will probably be eliminated by these tests, states the Hospital Bureau of Standards and Supplies. This non-profit purchasing organization in New York suggested the thermometer study to the National Bureau of Standards in 1947.

Science News Letter, June 23, 1951

## MEDICINE

## Goal: 13,000 Doctors

► SOME NEW means must be found to meet the military requirement of 13,000 physicians continually on active duty over a period of 10 or more years, Dr. Richard L. Meiling, chairman, Armed Forces Medical Policy Council, Office of the Secretary of Defense, told members of the American Medical Association meeting in Atlantic City, N. J.

The 10 years is the period of "tension" which the Secretary of Defense, Gen. Marshall, has stated we must plan for.

Dr. Meiling favors a plan, such as currently operates in other democratic countries, whereby each medical graduate serves his country the same as each 18- or 19-year-old under the universal military service for a prescribed period of time. This service could be in several small periods or one single period depending on the individual and the military needs.

The large general hospitals and specialized hospitals overseas that we had in World War II are out of the picture now. We cannot build, staff, or operate them, Dr. Meiling said. Furthermore we do not need them, because "today no U. S. military patient is more than 30 to 36 flying hours from the specialized and definitive care of hospitals of continental United States."

Unification of our forces whereby a Navy doctor may find himself working in an Army hospital commanded by an Army officer, or the reverse, is only the beginning of the kind of medical and hospital coordination needed now. With 16 nations fighting with us in Korea and the develop-

ment of the North Atlantic pact nations forces in Europe, our doctors may find themselves serving under foreign commanders and our commanding officers may find their medical and hospital services manned by foreign personnel, Dr. Meiling suggested.

"We must recognize these problems," he declared, "and dare not attempt their solution on the basis of nationalist ideas, provincialism or selfish pride in our own medical standards or advancement."

We must, he stressed, recognize the medical programs, customs and procedures of our allies as fully as their proficiency of arms if we are to have successful military operation under coordinated command.

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## PUBLIC HEALTH

## Build Out and Starve Out Rats

► RATS ARE dangerous, useless and destructive, warns the Illinois State Medical Society. They harbor and carry the germs of more than six serious diseases, including bubonic plague, typhus fever, infectious jaundice, rat-bite fever and food poisonings.

The damage they cause in the United States each year is estimated at \$250,000,000. Getting rid of rats by trapping and poisoning is a job for experts, particularly because rat poisons may also be dangerous to children and pet dogs and cats. But every home

owner can and should build out and starve out rats.

Start with the household garbage. In areas where garbage containers are allowed to stand uncovered for hours and even days, there is usually a preponderance of rats. All cans should be tightly covered and, if possible, kept on a platform 18 inches off the ground. If garbage is kept in a sunken container, care should be taken that the rats cannot burrow underneath and that the container is not cracked. If garbage is burned, be sure that nothing remains except the ash. Paper, rags, packing material should not be allowed to accumulate because they provide nesting places for rats.

Every effort should be made to have cellars ratproof. There should be a concrete floor, masonry walls and well fitting windows and doors. There should be no openings around pipes or wires and all drains should have narrow-slotted protective covers.

Food, such as vegetables or other garden produce, and firewood must be stored on platforms elevated 18 inches above the floor and 18 inches away from all walls.

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## INVENTION

## Sound-Absorbing Plywood Has Textile-Backed Surface

► WOOD CAN be used as a sound-absorbing surface covering in the interior of rooms if used in a type of plywood which has a special surface to diffuse sound waves or noise. Patent 2,556,884 was awarded to Theodor Muller, New York City, for this invention. The patent has been assigned to Muller-Barringer, also of New York.

This interior finish is a multi-ply wood board having a thin flexible wood ply at its base which is reinforced by a textile backing bonded to it. The top and intermediate layers, substantially thicker than the lower layer, are cut through with parallel V-shaped grooves, both lengthwise and crosswise.

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