

## MEDICINE

# Steps To Control Polio

Find polio virus is in blood stream for a few days before hitting nerves, giving hope of protection if suitable vaccinating material can be made.

► THE DAY when children can be protected from the paralysis and crippling of poliomyelitis seems much closer as a result of almost revolutionary findings presented to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology meeting in New York.

This good news comes from the discovery, by Dr. David Bodian of Johns Hopkins University and independently by Dr. Dorothy M. Horstmann of Yale University, that the polio virus gets into the blood stream for a few days before it attacks the brain and nerves.

For a quarter of a century scientists have held that the polio virus went directly from the back of the nose and throat or from the digestive tract to the nerves. This led to a dim view of the prospects of vaccination or drug treatment or prophylaxis, because there seemed no way of getting either vaccine or drugs to the virus in the nerves.

With the virus present in the blood for even a few days, however, a chemical or a vaccine, if a suitable one can be made, can be shot right into the blood where the virus is lingering before it reaches the nerves and brain.

The virus is in the blood before paralysis or any symptoms appear. This, Dr. Bodian and Dr. Horstmann pointed out, is at least one reason why its presence there has not been detected before. It was not looked for early enough in the incubation period of the disease before the patient was sick.

Dr. Bodian and Dr. Horstmann made their findings on monkeys and chimpanzees. But the course of infection in the chimpanzee fed the polio virus is very much like that in humans during polio epidemics, Dr. Bodian stated.

It is while the virus is in the blood that the body sets up antibodies to it. If enough of these are produced, the virus is stopped before it gets to the brain and nerves, and there is no paralysis. If not enough are produced, paralysis develops.

Protecting children from paralysis during epidemic periods should be possible by giving them extra antibodies to the virus. At least two sources of such antibodies exist. One is the gamma globulin fraction of pooled blood plasma which is now used to protect against measles and modify its course. Another is the globulin fraction of placental blood from women in childbirth.

Vaccination against polio seems more promising now in view of both of these findings and of those reported by Dr. Howard

A. Howe of Johns Hopkins University. He vaccinated chimpanzees with a polio virus from monkeys after the virus had been treated with formalin to destroy its disease-producing properties. The chimps did not get paralysis when active virus was given them after the vaccination and again 19 months later.

Attempts to vaccinate children with inactivated virus, made years ago, failed. It may be that the new knowledge reported here may lead to better success in the future.

Science News Letter, April 26, 1952

## MARINE BIOLOGY

## Animal and Bacterial Life Found in Ocean's Depths

► PROOF THAT both animal and bacterial life forms exist at the greatest ocean depths has been brought back to San Francisco by the Royal Danish ship, GALATHEA, after 18 months at sea.

Probing for the first time in history that part of the ocean depths that lies between 18,000 and 34,000 feet, the ship's scientists brought to the surface eyeless fishes, hundreds of new species of marine life. Thus they succeeded in establishing definite proof that animal life exists in the deepest parts of the ocean.

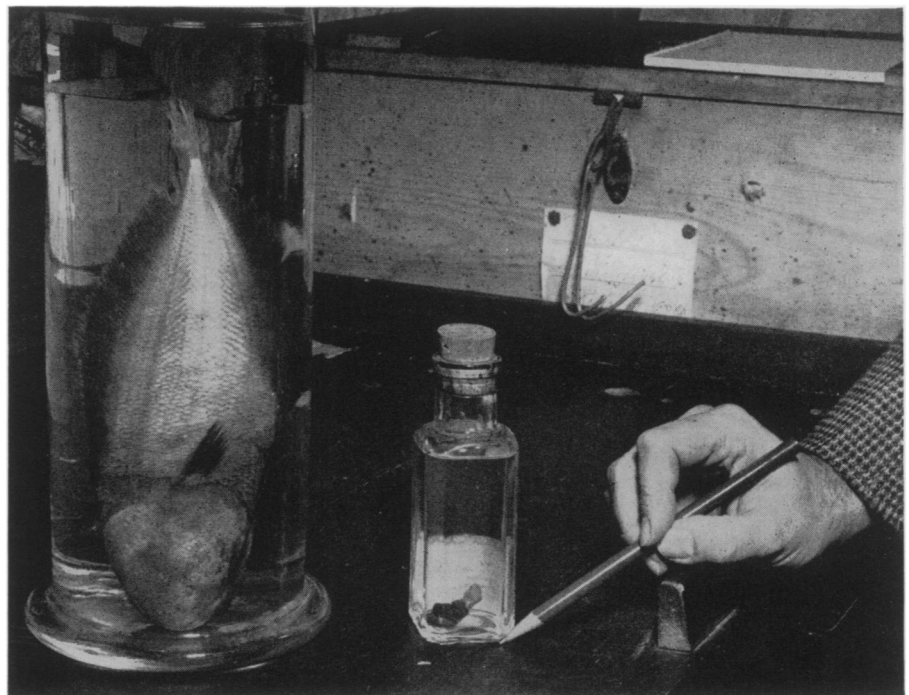
The animals that managed to survive the tremendous pressures at such depths, 1,000 times that on the earth's surface, were all small, none measuring more than one inch. Their size is determined, according to Dr. Anton F. Bruun, scientific head of the expedition, by the availability of food.

Forms of animal life found at 34,000 feet included sea cucumbers or a species of marine worm, mussels, sea anemones and crustaceans.

No fish were found at depths greater than 23,000 feet. Those that were found between 18,000 and 23,000 feet were either completely eyeless or had underdeveloped, useless eyes. They were pale of color and very feeble.

Dredging ooze from the ocean floor, a sort of pale tannish color, the scientists found it contained a kind of bacteria which they were able to keep alive in the ship's laboratory under great pressures.

The bacteria seemed not to suffer when brought out in surface pressures but they did not multiply until returned to the pressures to which they were accustomed.



**DEEP SEA SPECIMENS**—Two unusual specimens dredged from the deep by scientists on board the GALATHEA. In the large container is a species of Typhlone, an eyeless fish taken from a depth of about three miles. The small bottle contains a new species of sea anemone, scraped from the deepest part of the ocean, 34,000 feet in the Philippine Deep.

Four American scientists have been with the expedition at various stages of its progress in the last year and a half. They are Dr. Grace Pickford of Yale University, Dr. Rolf Bolin of Stanford University, Dr. Claude ZoBell of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, Calif., and Dr. Richard Morita, his assistant. The Danish scientific staff numbered eleven.

Sailing from Copenhagen in October 1950, the GALATHEA has come two-thirds of the way around the world, by a route that took her along both east and west coasts of Africa, through the Indian Ocean, in the South Pacific, and to Hawaii and continental United States. From this point, the ship expects to travel south through the Panama Canal with stops in the Caribbean and thence back to Denmark.

Science News Letter, April 26, 1952

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

### New Stoplight Protects Motorists on Sharp Curve

► A NEW type of stoplight being used by Virginia on U. S. Highway 11 is designed to protect motorists against themselves, the American Publics Works Association reported in Chicago.

Deaths on a particular curve near Natural Bridge have reached a total of 12 during the last 10 years. Normally red, the time interval for the stoplight is designed to make motorists halt their cars if they are traveling too fast to go around the curve safely.

When a car approaches the curve, it passes over a detector in the highway which sends an impulse to the stoplight. If the motorist is driving 25 miles an hour or less, the light will turn green before the motorist has to stop. If he is traveling faster, he must stop until the light flashes the go-ahead signal.

Science News Letter, April 26, 1952

#### BIOCHEMISTRY

## Nucleic Acid Isolated

► NUCLEIC ACID, one of the most important and mysterious substances in the body, has been isolated from the thymus glands of calves by Dr. Norman S. Simmons of the University of California at Los Angeles Medical School.

So far as is known, this is the first time that nucleic acid has been isolated in its whole, pure state.

Nucleic acid is the material that exists in the nucleus of every living cell. The genes that are found in the nucleus and thought to be responsible for the color of eyes, body size, sex, etc., are probably masses of nucleic acid combined with proteins.

Dr. Simmons and his associates in the U.C.L.A. Medical School's Atomic Energy Project revealed that basic studies on the acid have shown that the molecule is actually two to eight times larger than previously thought.

"Nucleic acid is a long, thin molecule," explained Dr. Simmons. "It is much like a string of several hundred pearls, coiled up and twisted into a solid mass, with protein molecules stuck to many of the beads.

"The task was to unravel this delicate mass without breaking the string. Such factors as high temperatures, enemy enzymes, alkalinity or acidity, or too much time spent in the process, will snap the string.

"The methods we used were refinements of old methods developed over the past 50 years. The pure acid is now being isolated under the most gentle conditions from thymus glands of calves in one day."

The scientists are now studying the material to determine correct molecular weight, size, shape and constituents with the ultimate goal of understanding its func-

tion in human growth and development and repair.

An important part of the work is its relation to cancerous body cells and body cells injured by ionizing radiation.

Science News Letter, April 26, 1952

Cheese consumption averaged 7.2 pounds per person during 1951.

#### SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 61 APRIL 26, 1952 No. 17

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N. St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C., North 2255. Edited by WATSON DAVIS.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs. \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

Change of address: Three weeks notice is required. When ordering a change please state exactly how magazine is now addressed. Your new address should include postal zone number if you have one.

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Printed in U. S. A. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Washington, D. C. under the act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at the special rate of postage provided for by Sec. 34.40, P. L. and R., 1948 Edition, paragraph (d) (act of February 28, 1925; 39 U. S. Code 283), authorized February 28, 1950. Established in mimeographed form March 18, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide to periodical literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index.

Member Audit Bureau of Circulation. Advertising Representatives: Howland and Howland, Inc., 393 7th Ave., N.Y.C., Pennsylvania 6-5566 and 360 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago. STATE 2-4822.

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