MEDICINE

No Antibiotics for Colds

"Standard" cold treatment of going to bed, keeping warm and drinking plenty of fluids works better for children than addition of sulfa drugs or antibiotics.

► HERE IS the way to treat a common cold:

Put the patient to bed, keep him warm, give him plenty of fluids and aspirin if needed. Do not give sulfa drugs or antibiotics unless or until complications develop.

Patients got well faster on this "standard" cold treatment than those given either a sulfa drug or an antibiotic in addition to the standard treatment, Drs. Howard S. Traisman and L. Martin Hardy of Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, reported at the meeting of the Illinois State Medical Society.

Their reports were based on a study of 159 child patients divided into four groups. One group got the standard treatment, the other groups each got standard treatment plus either a sulfa drug or one of two antibiotics. All had the usual cold symptoms with fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit for about two days.

More than half, 56%, of the standard treatment group got well in one week, Another 34% were well in two weeks while 10% took longer. The drug-treated group all together, however, could show only 39% recovered in one week, 48% in two weeks and 13% taking longer than two weeks.

Complications developed in 16.3% of the standard treatment group and in 12.3% of the sulfa-antibiotics groups. To the doctors' surprise, however, 72.8% of the complications developed within the first five days of standard treatment, while 62.5% developed after five days in the sulfa-antibiotics groups.

The doctors think that the drugs postponed the complications and that the late development of complications was the reason for the longer average time it took the sulfa-antibiotics treated children to recover.

The study, Dr. Hardy said, was set up to prove or disprove his and Dr. Traisman's contention that four out of five cases of "colds" or "fevers" in children run a course of three to five days to recovery with simple bed rest, fluids and aspirin. In six or seven percent of the cases, the condition will prove to be not colds but measles or some other infection, while the remainder may develop some complication such as infection of ear or of neck glands or bronchitis, pneumonia or meningitis.

The use of sulfa drugs or antibiotics, the Chicago doctors believe, is futile as far as curing the cold goes, and may veil or confuse the true course of the disease when the fever means something more serious.

The doctors plan to continue the study until several hundred children from infancy to age 12 have been included.

Science News Letter, June 6, 1953

METEOROLOGY

Rain and Tornadoes Caused by Storm Clashes

► GENERAL ATMOSPHERIC conditions for tornadoes and lots of rain have been "extremely good."

Dr. Harry Wexler, director of the Weather Bureau's office of scientific services, explained that a great deal of extremely warm, moist air has been coming up into the mid part of the nation from the Gulf of Mexico. There it has been met by storms coming in from the Pacific and over the Rocky Mountains. The storms, pushing cold fronts ahead of them, meet the warm moist air.

Powerful energies are involved, Dr. Wexler said, in these meetings, energies many time greater than the whole series of A-bombs that were set off in Nevada this spring. The clash which results, the turbulence, the moving about of tons and tons of air, resulted this year in the production of two or three times the normal number of tornadoes and heavier rainfall than usual.

However, there have been more severe tornadoes than those of this year, and no one at the Weather Bureau claims that there is yet a record number of tornadoes for one year. Dr. Wexler pointed to the famous Tri-State tornado of March 18, 1925, which killed 689 people in Missouri, Illinois and Indiana.

The Michigan tornado, on the Canadian border, called to Dr. Wexler's mind a long series of Michigan tornadoes. He made the point that, no matter how unusual the current weather seems, it can usually be topped merely by going back into the Weather Bureau's files.

For instance, he said, 1816 is known as the year without a summer. Two or three shots of really cold air came down into New England during what should have been summer, raising havoc with the crops.

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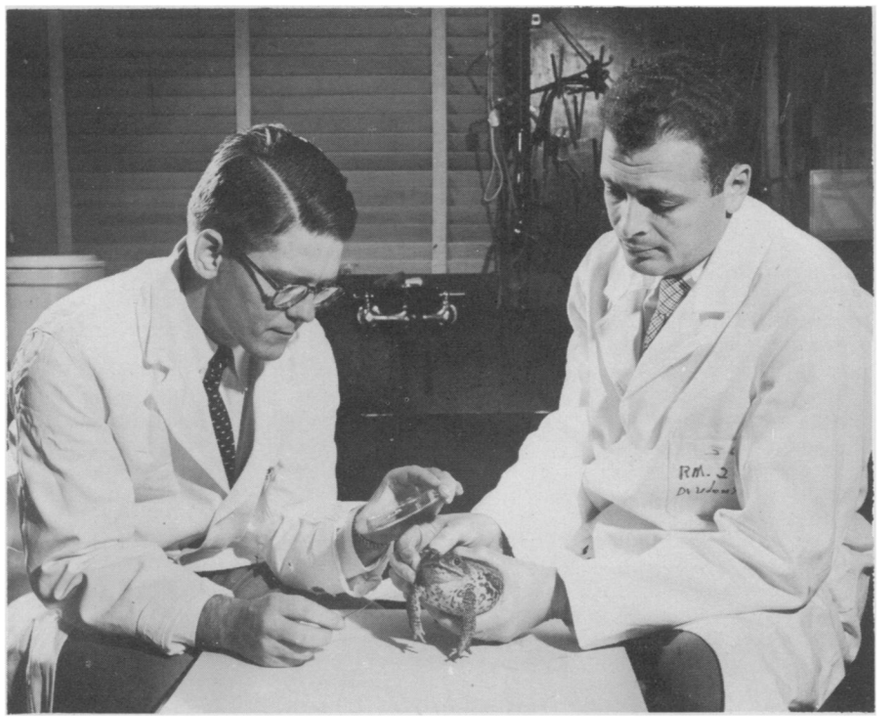

HYPERTENSION STUDIES—Milking the poison gland of a tropical toad, Bufo Marinus, *used in the study of serotonin, an important body substance associated with hypertension. The serotonin studies are being conducted by Dr. Sidney Udenfriend, Carroll T. Clark, and Dr. Elwood Titus of the National Heart Institute, Public Health Service. Drs. Clark and Udenfriend are shown here collecting the venom, which is stored in the large neck gland of the toad.*