

MEDICINE

Bleach Freckles, Skins

Purified monobenzyl ether of hydroquinone, finely milled and made into ointment, removes dark color from skin, such as found in liver spots and freckles.

► **GOOD RESULTS** with chemical treatment of liver spots, severe freckles, the darkened skin of Addison's disease and berlock dermatitis, in which the skin turns dark after use of certain perfumes, are reported by Drs. Aaron Bunsen Lerner and Thomas B. Fitzpatrick of Portland, Ore., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (June 13).

The chemical used is a purified and finely milled monobenzyl ether of hydroquinone. It was made into an ointment which has been given the trade name Benoquin by the Paul B. Elder Co. of Bryan, Ohio.

In answer to the question whether this chemical can be used to remove all the pigment, or color, from a dark skinned person, such as a Negro, the doctors state:

"In general the preparations reported herein cannot be used for this purpose unless a concentrated effort is made over a long period of time.

"Even so, results would be questionable; however, in certain special cases complete depigmentation may be practicable, as in patients with vitiligo or those predisposed to this disorder."

Vitiligo, or piebald skin, is a condition in which smooth light colored patches appear.

Two Negro patients who had a disfiguring vitiligo of the face and body used the ointment on a single arm for long periods of time. They became completely depigmented except for the air and eyes, which

kept their normal coloring. One became pregnant after she had lost her dark color but was still under treatment. She gave birth to a normally colored baby.

It takes from three weeks to six months for the chemical to remove the dark color from the skin. During this time the ointment is used twice daily. After depigmentation has occurred, it is used once a day and later once a week. After treatment is stopped, the dark color comes back in two months or longer.

Some patients get a reddening and swelling of the skin from the chemical. Sensitization occurred in 13% of patients.

The chemical is not poisonous and it is possible it could be given by mouth, but the Portland doctors have not tried this method.

It was of little or no value in cafe au lait spots or dark moles.

The Portland doctors treated 84 patients with various darkened skin conditions and found that 64 showed good results. They do not recommend the treatment for mild or moderate freckles, because these usually fade out during the winter and because there is relatively high skin sensitization to the drug.

The work with this chemical was carried out over four years at Western Reserve Medical School, Cleveland, the Mayo Foundation, Rochester, Minn., University of Michigan Medical School, and University of Oregon Medical School.

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reservists. Many were members of scientific research teams or were engineers vital to production of war goods.

Dr. Chilton and representatives of other groups strongly supported a bill which would set up a National Manpower Board to control recall of reservists in time of war. The Board would be in the President's office and thus would be able to control Defense Department reservist call ups.

Represented among the groups were the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Physics, the Armed Forces Chemical Association, the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Scientific Manpower Commission, the National Electrical Manufacturers Association and the Manufacturing Chemists Association.

The Congress of Industrial Organizations also supports the bill, it was learned.

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CHEMISTRY

Spanish Moss May Yield Household Wax

► **FURNITURE WAX** may soon come from Spanish moss which festoons trees of the Southland's swamps.

Freshly gathered Spanish moss contains a green colored wax amounting to five percent of the plant's weight. This wax is easily purified and gives a hard, glossy finish to woodwork and leather, comparable to commercial waxes. Drs. Seldon D. Feurt and Lauretta E. Fox of the University of Florida College of Pharmacy, reporting in *Science* (May 29), urge some industrial organization to explore this possibility.

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BIOCHEMISTRY

Fatty Substance Kills Cancer Cells

► **A NEW** clue to the chemical control of cancer is a fatty substance isolated from the small intestines of mice and rats. It destroys certain cancer cells in test tube studies.

Dr. Leslie R. Bennett, assistant professor of radiology at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, reports that the precise chemical nature of the material has not yet been determined.

The substance exhibited no effect upon most normal tissues in test tube studies. It does, however, possess slight damaging properties to blood-forming cells.

The relatively low incidence of primary cancer in the small intestine suggested that its tissues might contain substances which prevent changes ultimately resulting in cancer. The fatty substance isolated in the study might be one of the cancer-prevention factors naturally occurring in these organs.

The material has not been used in the treatment of established cancer in experimental animals.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Warn on Reservist Policy

► **EVERYBODY** who has been on active military duty since June, 1951, can be called back to uniform in an emergency or a war no matter how essential his job is.

This would seriously disrupt the war-making industrial potential of the nation. More than 25% of all engineers and scientists now engaged in research and development programs in the country could be placed in uniform by the Defense Department, the Engineering Manpower Commission declared in New York.

Dr. Thomas H. Chilton, chairman of the commission, a body set up by the major engineering societies, reported that these are the very people on whom we depend for our continued technological and economic superiority. He said that "this situation is the

logical result of the operation of our military service laws as they are now written."

Public Law 51, passed in June, 1951, creates a compulsory reserve into which go all those leaving the service.

This compulsory reserve will shortly exceed 10,000,000. Every year it includes more people who are vital to the defense production economy, Dr. Chilton pointed out.

"The recalling of reservists to active duty in time of emergency or war rests solely in the hands of the Department of Defense. This situation," Dr. Chilton cautioned, "can create chaos in the industrial support of mobilization."

Dr. Chilton said that great industrial dislocation was caused at the start of the Korean Action by indiscriminate call-up of